

THE SOVIET UNION AND IRAN STRATEGIC
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES NAVY

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LeRoy Windsor Chapple

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

Monterey, California



THESIS

THE SOVIET UNION AND IRAN
STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS
FOR THE UNITED STATES NAVY

by

LeRoy Windsor Chapple

June 1981

Thesis Advisor:

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STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS
FOR THE UNITED STATES NAVY

by
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Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy
B.A., University of Washington, 1971

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

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June 1981

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the nature and the scope of Soviet relations with Iran with particular emphasis on the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79 and the Iranian-Iraqi War which, as of this writing is still in progress. The analysis focuses on 1) The importance of Iran to Soviet decision makers in terms of the U.S.S.R.'s security, ideological, cultural and economic goals in Southwest Asia; 2) The factors which act to constrain Soviet foreign policy in Iran and the Persian Gulf region and; 3) The strategic implications of Soviet policy in Iran for the United States Navy and U.S. national security. This analysis concludes that a superpower confrontation in Iran, although unlikely by design, is distinctly possible due to the volatile nature of Iran and the problems that beset the states of Southwest Asia.

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I. INTRODUCTION

"The problem of Russian capabilities and intentions," said a U.S. Government official in 1945, "is so complex, and the unknowns so numerous, that it is impossible to grasp the situation fully and describe it in a set of coherent and well established conclusions."¹ The multifaceted problem of Soviet intentions with respect to Iran is the focus of this assessment. The Soviets have long been interested in cultivating ties and gaining influence in the Persian Gulf region. The problems that any outsider must deal with in this volatile area have hindered Soviet efforts as well as Russian designs for centuries. The current Islamic fundamentalist movement in Iran presents one more obstacle to foreign policy planners as well as a fresh opportunity for diplomats and decision makers in the Soviet Union. The problem for the Kremlin is a dilemma of choice among a broad menu of active and passive diplomatic, economic, ideologic, and military courses available not only in Iran, but also, the Persian Gulf, Southwest Asia and the world.

This assessment will address the following questions with respect to Iran and the Iran-Iraq War: What are the foreign policy options open to the Soviets? What are the factors that condition the U.S.S.R.'s selection and implementation of a policy line? What course of action are the Soviets presently

following, and what will the Kremlin's future strategy likely entail? Finally, what are the strategic implications for the United States Navy as it relates to U.S. foreign policy and national security affairs? It is the contention of several analysts that Iran is a keystone nation for both the Soviet Union and the United States and may well be the location for a major superpower confrontation in the 1980's. It is this sobering scenario that enhances the assessment of Soviet intentions in Iran, for, Soviet capabilities are known and Russian willingness to confront the United States may be growing.

The analysis is presented in four sections. The first segment will discuss the historical setting to place the actors in their respective international relations positions and will describe the broad framework of Soviet objectives in Southwest Asia. Part two will focus on the U.S.S.R.'s attitude and behavior during the Iranian revolution in 1978-79. The third section will consider the Soviet response to the Iranian-Iraqi War which, at the time of this analysis, continues unresolved. The concluding segment will analyze Soviet foreign policy in Iran and review the strategic implications for the United States Navy.

II. HISTORICAL SETTING

A. OVERVIEW

Russian history has been significantly influenced by geography.² Characterized by its immense open spaces, steppes, plains and inland seas, Russia has always been a land of conflict and conquest. The defense of this enormous Eurasian landmass and the establishment of secure frontiers has been the major goal of all who have ruled over this region, be they Czars or Communists. The second most prevalent drive in Russian history, expansionism, is a direct result of this relentless pursuit for security. Territorial expansion, in Richard Pipes' words was "the Russian way," just as it has become the Soviet way.³ This outreach for security has consistently been directed southward through the Middle East towards the Indian Ocean. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were punctuated by periodic Russian drives through the Caucasus region into Southwest Asia which led to the accumulation of territory in the vicinity of the Caspian Sea. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a large measure of Russian energy was expended on competition with the British in Persia in order to create a buffer zone to assuage Russian insecurities.

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 did little to remove the traditional Russian fear of insecurity, nor has it altered the

Russian tradition of southward expansion. The Soviets have maintained a keen interest in the southern border regions as well as in all contiguous states. On three occasions since October 1917, the Soviets have militarily occupied territories in this southern region including: The 1919-21 Civil War period when the Red Army pursued the counter-revolutionary forces into Persia, the 1941-46 tripartite partitioning of Iran in conjunction with Britain and the United States, and the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan. The purposes of these military excursions were to provide security, stabilize the southern regions, and oppose Western influence in the Middle East. It is with this macro view of the Russian experience in mind that we examine the evolving relationship of the Soviets and their largest southern neighbor.

B. THE SOVIET UNION AND IRAN

The Soviet Union's approach toward Iran is quite different from its approach to other Persian Gulf states. In terms of the depths of interest, the duration of diplomatic links and the importance attached to geography and stability on its frontiers, Russian interest in Iran in one scholar's words is "profound and long-standing."⁴ Traditionally, Russian policies toward Iran have been subject to fluctuation, ranging from aggression and hostility to expressions of good will and aid in support of Iranian development. The Persians have long regarded the Soviet Union with distrust and fear. The primary cause of this Iranian attitude has been the persistent Russian

southward expansionism. Iran lost territory to Russia on three occasions in the nineteenth century following military hostilities in Georgia which resulted in the treaty of Gulistan in 1813, in the Armenian region following the Treaty of Turkomanchai in 1828, and in the areas east and west of the Caspian Sea in 1873.⁵ Czarist Russia gained monetary, fishing, railroad and mineral concessions from the treaties that followed these conflicts as well as preferential foreign trade status at Iran's expense.

The twentieth century has been characterized by great power maneuvering to gain influence and control in the Persian Gulf region. In 1907, an Anglo-Russian agreement divided Iran into British and Russian spheres of influence with a neutral zone in-between. The Russian sphere embraced five Iranian provinces adjacent to Russian including: Azerbaijan, Gilan, Mazanderan, Gorgan and Khorasan.⁶ The Russian sphere also included large areas in the central part of Iran as far south as Isfahan. It thus included most of Iran's urban and cultural centers as well as the most productive agricultural regions in the north. During World War I the Russian and the British armies, disregarding Iran's neutrality, operated freely throughout Iran.

In spite of the denunciations of the Czarist imperialist objectives by the newly created Bolshevik government in 1917, Red Army units invaded Iran's Caspian region in 1920. The Soviets gave a local rebel, Kuchik Khan, assistance in

establishing the Soviet Republic of Gilan, which was the first experience in Soviet-sponsored communist rule in Asia.⁷ The Gilan Republic was short-lived and collapsed in 1922 following the Red Army's retreat from Iran. Moscow decided to abandon the small-scale Gilan effort in an attempt to normalize its relations with Iran as a whole.

In pursuit of this new enlarged policy perspective, Moscow concluded a Treaty of Friendship with Iran on February 26, 1921.⁸ When it came to the actual implementation of this treaty, Russia's southern neighbor soon discovered that the Kremlin was reluctant to abandon the traditional objectives of Czarist imperialism. One ominous remnant of the old Czarist expansionist tendencies was reflected within the treaty, namely, article six which reserved the right of the Soviet Union to send troops into Iranian territory should the latter become a base for anti-Soviet aggression. The 1921 treaty was invoked as justification for a Soviet invasion of Iran in 1941. Soviet leaders have subsequently agreed that the 1921 treaty gave the U.S.S.R. the legal right to send troops into Iran if there was any possible danger from any outside source. Indeed, the Soviet-Iranian Friendship Treaty has been brandished on numerous occasions during the Stalin, Krushchev and Brezhnev eras including:

1. During the 1952 leadership crisis in Iran which the Soviets announced support for Premier Mossadeq and nationalization of the Iranian Oil Corporation. The Kremlin applauded Mossadeq's efforts as "anti-imperialist," while the renewal of U.S. military advisorship of Iran's Armed Forces under the Shah in 1953 was "incompatible with principles of good-neighborly relations" agreed upon in the 1921 Treaty of Friendship. 9

2. In 1955 on conclusion of the Baghdad Pact in which Iran joined Iraq and Turkey in forming a military alliance. The formation of this pact prompted the Soviet Union to transmit strong notes of protest in which Moscow charged that "the accession of Iran to this military alignment is incompatible with the interests of consolidating peace and security in the region of the Middle and Near East and contradicts the good-neighborly relations between Iran and the Soviet Union" and accused Iran of violating the Soviet-Iranian Treaty of 1921.¹⁰

3. Following the 1958 Iraqi coup, when Iran pressed the United States for greater assurances of support in the Middle East. In consonance with Pakistan and Turkey, Iran urged the U.S. to formally join the Baghdad Pact, or as it came to be known, the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). The result was that the U.S. signed a bilateral defensive agreement with Iran in March 1959. Throughout this period the Kremlin attempted to forestall such an eventuality. Moscow attempted to prevail upon Iran's Shah to sign a non-aggression pact with the U.S.S.R. in place of a defensive agreement with the U.S. as an extension of the 1921 Treaty.¹¹ On March 3, 1959, the Iranian Foreign Minister announced that Iran was denouncing Articles five and six of the Soviet-Iranian Friendship Treaty. Moscow countered on 15 March with an article published in Pravda asserting that the treaty remained fully operative despite Iran's action.¹² It was not until 1978 when Iran was in the throes of revolution that the 1921 treaty was called upon again by the Russians.

Following the conclusion of the 1921 treaty, Iran's relations with the Soviet Union could be described as correct, but not friendly. There were several incidents along the Iranian-Soviet border during this period and Reza Shah had solid grounds on which to suspect the involvement of Soviet authorities. At the same time, Reza Shah was determined to stamp out indigenous communism and drove the Iranian Communist Party (Tudeh) underground which nettled Moscow.¹³ In addition, economic problems considerably dampened any spirit of cordiality in Soviet-Iranian relations. Problems were manifested in arguments over oil concessions, trade and fishing rights. Largely to circumvent these problems, Reza Shah decided in 1931 to move

towards the establishment of a trade monopoly with the new leadership evolving in Germany.¹⁴

At the outbreak of World War II, Germany accounted for 41 percent of the total foreign trade in Iran. After declaring its neutrality in 1939, the Iranian ruling elite increased trade with Germany which was carried overland via Russia. Russian-German cooperation reached its zenith in 1940. A secret protocol to the Four-Power Mutual Assistance Pact between Germany, Italy, Japan and the U.S.S.R. stated that "the area south of Batum and Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf is recognized as the center of the aspirations of the Soviet Union."¹⁵ The German execution of operation Barbarossa foiled those carefully charted plans and the Soviets and British, citing the German threat to Southwest Asia, invaded Iran in August 1941. Iran was again divided into spheres of influence and the Soviet Union obtained control of the same five provinces cited in the 1907 Partition while Britain assumed control over the remainder of the country. The capital, Teheran, became a neutral enclave. Under Soviet and British pressure, Reza Shah abdicated and departed Iran aboard a British vessel for South Africa where he died in 1944.

The new pro-Ally cabinet that came to power in Iran concluded a Tripartite Treaty of Alliance on January 21, 1942 with Britain and the Soviet Union. The treaty stated that the presence of Allied troops on Iranian soil was not a military occupation; it gave the Allies transit and communications

facilities, reaffirmed Iranian independence, and provided for withdrawal of the Allied troops within six months after the end of the war with the Axis.¹⁶

Soon after the Japanese surrender was signed, serious anti-government dissidence broke out in the Soviet-controlled province of Azerbaijan. Attempts by the Iranian government to control these disturbances were thwarted by the Russians who used the occasion to broaden their hold in the northwest and aided rebels in proclaiming the Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan on December 12, 1945. This action was followed by the refusal of the Soviet Union to abide by the provisions of the Tripartite Treaty and withdraw her troops. Finally, after two months of United Nations negotiations involving the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union and Iran, President Harry Truman issued a nuclear ultimatum to Premier Stalin. The Soviet troops were subsequently withdrawn from Iran in May 1946.¹⁷ The price extracted for the Soviet withdrawal was a joint economic agreement with the Iranians for the exploitation of oil in the northwest provinces of Iran. The new Iranian governing body (Majlis) however, refused to ratify the Iranian-Soviet oil agreement on October 22, 1947, and a new cold war period of relations between Iran and the Soviet Union was initiated.

Soviet-Iranian relations have passed through four distinct phases since the Azerbaijan crisis ended in 1947:

1. Soviet consolidation and the oil crisis, 1951-53
2. Campaigning against Iran's Western Alliance, 1954-62
3. Encouraging Iranian neutrality, 1963-77
4. The Revolutionary Period, 1978-81

The policies and tactics employed in each of these phases have fluctuated, but the goal has been unvarying: to deter Iran from her Western Alliance, and to increase Soviet influence in the Persian Gulf. Soviet-Iranian relations overall could be characterized as generally poor between 1947-1962. During the Stalin years Soviet policies were crude and involved an alternating mix of threats and cajoling. The one period of improved Soviet-Iranian relations was during the 1951-53 oil nationalization struggle when the Mossadeq-led Iranian government attempted to adopt a more neutralist international policy. The ousting of Mossadeq in August 1953 and the restoration of the Pahlavi throne as a result of a successful U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operation ended this process and initiated the "special relationship" between Iran and the United States.¹⁸ After 1955, and the conclusion of the Baghdad Pact, Iranian-Soviet relations were particularly tense and a coordinated policy of "hostility and obstructionism" was followed by the Soviets.¹⁹ Moscow subsequently pursued a three-pronged attack against Iran via subversion, propaganda, and diplomacy to diminish the effect of the Western Alliance.

It was not until 1962, when Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi announced that no United States military bases or missile sites would be permitted on Iranian territory, that Soviet hostilities diminished.²⁰ Once progress had been made in clearly limiting Iran's commitment towards military cooperation with the West (CENTO), the Soviets inaugurated an "aid and trade" offensive which was designed to indicate that the U.S.S.R. was willing to overlook the political reversals of the post-war period, to recognize the reality of the Shah's power, and to offer technical, economic, and military assistance to Iran.²¹ This era of ostensible good will proved to be a watershed in Soviet-Iranian relations. The Soviet Union no longer had to force its way into Iran, instead, it posed as a friend to exploit soft spots or gaps opened by regional developments or Western policies. Economic détente was pursued on a bilateral basis between the Kremlin and Teheran. In addition, Iran established closer economic relations with the Warsaw Pact countries which were psychologically complementary to the new period of Soviet-Iranian cooperation.

During the period 1962-1978, Soviet-Iranian economic, military and political ties expanded greatly. The U.S.S.R. promoted projects such as the massive Isfahan steel complex, machine tool plants in Arak, a natural gas pipeline from Ahwaz to the Soviet Union (IGAT-1), silos and other agricultural facilities, and hydroelectric plants on the Aras and Atrek rivers along the Soviet-Iranian border.²² In January 1967 a

significant milestone was reached when Teheran signed an agreement with Moscow to purchase \$110 million dollars worth of Soviet military equipment thus making Iran the first Western Alliance partner (CENTO) to purchase military equipment from the U.S.S.R.²³ During this period the government-to-government and cultural relations advanced steadily marked by visits of Soviet dignitaries to Iran, trips to Moscow by the Shah, and the return of a Soviet military defector in 1976.²⁴

From the Soviet perspective, this modification of relations with Iran represented several distinct advantages:

1. It served to legitimize the Soviet Union as a trading partner for Iranian development which has important spillover effects into the Third World.

2. By asserting this partnership, Iran removed the self-imposed barrier against the presence of technicians from communist countries on its territory.

3. The trade relationships provided the Soviets with a new opportunity to establish direct contacts with the Iranian working classes, technocrats and military personnel.

4. It helped to legitimize the Tudeh as an acceptable, albeit limited, political movement associated with a friendly power.

5. It reduced Iranian dependence on the West. While economic, military and technical assistance may not have been equivalent to direct Soviet political influence in Iran, the increase in Soviet presence provided the framework in which political influence could grow.

C. SOVIET OBJECTIVES IN SOUTHWEST ASIA

Nations do not have to embrace the ideology of communism to develop friendly relations with the Soviet Union.²⁵ One can conclude from the behavior of the Brezhnev regime that

Marxist-Leninist doctrine is a somewhat diminished criterion for establishing and maintaining contact with the States of the Middle East, because Moscow has pursued and developed cordial relations with a number of the governments in this region where communism is not a viable ideology. Often, as is the case in Iran and Iraq, Communist Party factions which espouse the Kremlin brand of state organization are persecuted and suppressed. Moscow's response in these instances is to downplay the importance of ideology in favor of developing state-to-state relations. This is not to say that communism is irrelevant to the formation and conduct of Soviet policy, but that ideology does not drive the decision process. Moscow is certainly concerned with the preservation of a declared Marxist government as evidenced by their continuing efforts in Afghanistan.²⁶ As the world communist ideological leaders, the Soviets must follow this line to maintain their legitimacy and preeminent position and to reduce their vulnerability to attack by the People's Republic of China (PRC) based on Marxist-Leninist ideological grounds.

Communism, and world socialist goals, are important to the Kremlin because they provide inroads to the Third World and maintain the struggle against capitalist imperialism on a global scale. As opponents who voice alternative views, communists offer a viable choice to many nations which furthers the goals and interests of its declared leader. Therefore, and particularly in the Middle East, communist parties

are relevant but not overriding in their importance to Soviet policy. In Iran for example, during the reign of the Shah, it was deemed more important to further state-to-state relations than to promote the Tudeh party. The same may be said of the Iraqi communist party as discussed in Chapter IV below.²⁷ It can be anticipated that Moscow will vigorously support, promote, and defend communists in the Middle East only when the benefits outweigh the costs in state-to-state relations. It is also reasonable to conclude that in the absence of friendly state relations that ideological goals, and support to local communist movements, will be on the ascendency.

Economics has not played a central role in Soviet Middle East policy to-date. Rather, economics has most often been used as an instrument of foreign policy to further Soviet strategic and political aims.²⁸ The Soviet economy is founded on the principle of autarchy and has until recent years been overwhelmingly inward-looking. In the Soviet centrally planned economic model the planners have deemed it important to insulate the flow of U.S.S.R. products from external disruption. This has led to a state-controlled monopoly on foreign business and a high degree of bilateralism in trade. Trade is generally conducted to obtain essential imports, is most often conducted in a barter-like manner, and is tightly controlled to meet exact quotas imposed by central planners.²⁹ All decisions are made directly by the government, frequently without mediation of price comparisons, a situation which is alien to capitalist economic notions.

A review of economic relations with the Middle East leads to the conclusion that military aid and economic aid are important ingredients in Soviet behavior while trade is of a somewhat lesser important nature. One author whose study covers the period of 1954-75 shows that the Middle East region received over 70 percent of total Soviet aid and more than 75 percent of all Soviet military aid. Also, the Middle Eastern countries accounted for more than half of Russia's trade with the Third World. Of greater significance, the region's share of the U.S.S.R.'s aid and trade has sharply increased over time. The share of total aid delivered to Southwest Asia rose from less than half of Soviet expenditures during 1955-66 to about 85 percent during 1974-75. Militarily, the supplies delivered to this region increased from 55 percent during the earlier decade to nearly 90 percent in recent years.³⁰ The increases are indicative of Soviet priorities in global relations and demonstrate a specific trend of increasing interest in the Middle East. (See Table 2-1 for current figures.)

A separate and distinctly important economic and political objective of the Soviet Union is to exert positive influence if not control over Middle Eastern oil. The fundamental importance of Middle Eastern oil in the world energy market is sufficiently recognized. The growing weight of Soviet domestic oil production and consumption patterns and the resultant influence on Moscow's foreign policy is a subject of considerable

SOVIET ECONOMIC AND MILITARY RELATIONS
WITH LDC'S AND THE MIDDLE EAST
(MILLION U.S. \$)

A. Soviet Military Relations	Total Agreements	<u>1956-74</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1956-79</u>
	Middle East	18925	3325	5550	8715	2465	8365	47340
	Total Deliveries	11980	1195	4105	1735	325	5105	24445
	Middle East	13495	2040	3085	4705	5400	6615	35340
		9375	1080	1235	1720	890	3375	18675
B. Soviet Economic Aid	Total	<u>1954-79</u>		<u>1979</u>				
	Middle East	18190		1720				
C. Soviet Civilian Trade			<u>1965</u>		<u>1970</u>			<u>1975</u>
	Total		Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports
	Middle East		850	810	1255	1260	2695	4130
			310	230	785	445	1400	1570
			<u>1979</u>					
D. Soviet Transactions*	Total		Exports	Imports				
	Middle East		4155	4100				
			2380	1470				
	Total	<u>1979</u>						
	Middle East	18340						
		10555						

* Transactions = Military Agreements + Economic Aid + Civilian Trade

Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Communist Aid Activities in Non-Communist Less Developed Countries, 1979 and 1954-79, ER 80-10318U, October 1980.

debate.³¹ The pattern that appears to emerge is one where Soviet self-sufficiency in oil, their ability to supply the Warsaw Pact nations, and generate the foreign exchange necessary to purchase Western technology will decline in the near term.³² The proximity of abundant, relatively inexpensive Middle Eastern supplies of oil makes importation an economically feasible aim and increases the importance of Iran in Soviet policy planning.

The cultural aims of the Soviet Union are subordinate to all other categories and relate closely to the political objectives outlined above. Specifically, the Soviet goal to reduce and eliminate Western influence and replace it with Soviet control, is supported by cultural programs. Russian supercession is not an easy task. Western influence in Southwest Asia has been the overwhelming external influence for nearly two hundred years. Beginning with the military control and power exerted by European armies in the eighteenth century, Western notions of economics, finance, trade and technology have permeated the traditional structures of Muslim society.³³ The Soviets are viewed by traditionalists, both Arab and Persian, as a member of these external forces and consequently, the Russians also suffer from the backlash and frustration exhibited by nationalism in the region.

Moscow has not neglected the cultural front in Southwest Asia. The Kremlin has initiated positive steps to increase educational exchanges, to promote Soviet brotherhood through

sports, art and music, and to visibly demonstrate the U.S.S.R.'s scientific and technological achievements to the Third World.³⁴ These efforts have not produced a massive swing of Islamic attitudes away from European and American culture towards Soviet occidentalism. The Middle Eastern societies have a very eclectic attitude towards outside forces in that they are anxious to make use of all resources from East and West to increase indigenous development.

Recent events in Iran and Afghanistan have heightened the awareness of Soviet decision makers to Islam. Kremlin leaders are extremely sensitive to the possibility of ethnic and nationalistic developments in their own non-Russian republics.³⁵ The nearly fifty million Soviet Muslims in Central Asia and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East provide additional stimulus to Soviet cultural program development. There are many overlapping cultural and ethnic ties between Soviet Muslims and the people of Iran. These concerns lend added impetus and important emphasis to Soviet people-related programs inside the U.S.S.R. and within the Middle East region. Finally, the demographic trends charted by the 1979 Soviet census indicate an increasing population drift towards Central Asia. Current official predictions are that, by the year 2000, the majority of Soviet citizens will be Turkic-Muslims.³⁶ One could conclude from these factors that the emphasis on cultural unity and identity between U.S.S.R. and Middle Eastern states and the importance of Soviet cultural programs will increase in the near term.

The security goals of Soviet policy in the Middle East are directly related to geopolitics.³⁷ The strategic significance of Southwest Asia, its location, mineral resources and proximity to Soviet borders makes this region an essential ingredient in foreign policy planning. The historical quest for stable borders has been described in ample detail elsewhere. Soviet paranoia and concern for security amidst a condition of "capitalist encirclement" is another strong recurring theme in several analysts' works. Also, the drive for southward expansion towards warm-water ports is often described as a Soviet principle ambition. Although the analytical rationale for Russian behavior have varied, growing influence in Southwest Asia is an accurate depiction of the status of the Soviet Union today.

Security, the basic element of survival of the state, is the original principle Soviet political objective in the Middle East.³⁸ A second primary goal not unrelated to the first, is the reduction in physical presence and removal of Western influence in the region. The third objective is to expand the Soviet position in Southwest Asia with the ultimate long-term aim of controlling the region.³⁹ The Soviets have made several important inroads in furthering their aims, but they continue to strive toward a final achievement of regional political objectives. The U.S.S.R.'s current position vis-à-vis the Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War reflect these consistent long-term aims.

One critical dimension of security in the Soviet Union is the development and maintenance of superior Armed Forces. The U.S.S.R.'s military goals in Southwest Asia are integrated with their global military doctrine which is subordinate to the political policies of the state. This doctrine is described in great detail in a variety of sources.⁴⁰ For the purposes of this analysis it is important to remember that Soviet military power is a viable policy instrument that the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) can depend upon to execute state policy without the limitations of public debate. The Kremlin has built and deployed a truly global military force which is capable of furthering the security goals in Southwest Asia of deterring armed aggression against the Soviet state and, if required, intervening in the region to stabilize her borders.

In addition, there are several military objectives related to Iran and the Persian Gulf region:

1. It is important to reduce overall Soviet vulnerability to hostile military operations that could conceivably be conducted from land and sea-based forces in Southwest Asia.
2. To deny contiguous waters as sanctuaries or havens for hostile strategic weapons platforms including aircraft carrier forces and ballistic missile submarines.
3. To reduce and eliminate potentially hostile alliance forces from being organized and operated in the region, especially those of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).
4. To develop contingency plans, capabilities and tactics to intervene in a regional conflict, to maintain lines of friendly communication and transportation, and to deny hostile external forces the ability to exert military control over the region.

5. To develop and foster relationships with regional states which would enable Soviet forces to operate effectively in this region in times of crisis.

6. To promote Soviet military arms transfers and support infrastructures for training, logistics and transportation in support of state objectives.

7. Conduct visits, exchanges and demonstrations of Soviet power through military presence.

A review of these major categories of Soviet objectives in Southwest Asia emphasizes the superior position that political objectives have in this region. In particular, the goals of state security, reduction of Western presence and the promotion of Soviet influence are stressed in the Middle East. All other categories of aims are subordinate to the political goals of the Soviet Union.⁴¹ It is for political reasons that economic relations are promoted. Likewise, it is for reasons of state security that military strategy and military planning efforts are focused in the Middle East. Ideological and cultural aims are driven by the political expediencies described by Soviet decision makers. The Kremlin can be viewed as a highly centralized policy organization that will exploit all of their available resources to accomplish state political goals. It is with these objectives in mind that we now turn to recent developments in Iran.

III. MOSCOW AND THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

A. "PURELY AN INTERNAL AFFAIR"

The events of 1978-79 in Iran shocked the world. Certainly few, if any analysts in the United States or the Soviet Union were willing to extrapolate the reformist movement in Iran to the level of chaos and revolution that evolved in the course of 1978. On the surface, the Shah seemed to be in a position of unshakeable control as the new year dawned. Under his personal authority an army second to none in Southwest Asia was capably trained and equipped with the latest U.S. technology. The Armed Forces were judged to be intensely loyal to the state. Iran's economy was booming as oil revenues reached unprecedented levels. The internal police, Savak, were in positive control in the Iranian cities. Iran, the largest and most powerful nation in the Gulf and a close ally of the United States, was viewed by most observers as a "haven of stability" in the ferment of the Middle East.⁴² On the international scene, the Shah had followed a policy of national independence in the 1970's and had successfully achieved a relative balance of power between the superpowers and Iran. The Soviet Union was not in total agreement with all of the Shah's policies. In the 1970's the Iranian recognition of the People's Republic of China, the backing of the Omanis against the Dhofari insurgents and the support of Somalia against the

U.S.S.R. were particularly irksome to Soviet leaders. However, the Pahlavi regime was a known entity that provided a measure of stability on the Soviet's southern border and was rapidly becoming a valuable economic trading partner.

Under these conditions, the Soviets reacted to Iranian events of 1978 with caution. The official Soviet press generally refrained from any commentary on the events inside Iran. The standard reporting practice followed by the Soviet news media was to periodically cite foreign newspaper accounts regarding the events taking place in the Iranian cities and oil fields.⁴³ The official Soviet governmental reaction was to adopt a position of neutrality stating that the unrest in Iran was purely an internal affair. To wit, Soviet Chairman of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers Aleksei Kosygin sent a routine telegram of congratulations to Jaafar Sharif-Emami the new Iranian Prime Minister following his announced succession to Dr. Jamshid Amuzegar in September 1978.⁴⁴ The business-as-usual approach towards Iran was highlighted by Soviet President Brezhnev's greetings to the Shah on National Day in Iran October 30, in which Brezhnev conveyed "congratulations and wishes for progress and success on the occasion of the country's national holiday."⁴⁵

The first indication that Moscow's attitude towards the Iranian situation was changing was a radio broadcast interview with Izvestiia political commentator Aleksandr Bovin on 2 October, in which Bovin stated that the Iranian unrest was "caused

by the growth in social inequality, the general corruption of the government bureaucracy and the unrestrainable inflation." The commentator went on to describe the extent of the unrest, the demands of the opposition, and the absolute involvement of the United States in support of the current regime.⁴⁶ Bovin's themes were later published in Literaturnaya Gazeta on 25 October, in which he vigorously denied any Soviet involvement in Iran's struggle by stating: "the (Iranian) government is busy telling the population that the events taking place are the result of an 'anti-popular plot' on the part of certain 'Marxists,' the result of outside interference that is jeopardizing Iran's independence. Mechanically, they brandish the 'threat of Communism.' However, few people believe this." Bovin again cited the American interest and involvement with the Shah's regime and concluded by predicting that "as long as the causes remain the consequences will persist: an unstable situation in the country, prone to explosions and upheavals."⁴⁷

B. A TURNING POINT IS REACHED

On November 5, 1978 Sharif-Emami agreed to resign as Iranian Prime Minister after two and one-half disastrous months in office during which time the opposition to the Shah began to coalesce. Two days later, in a televised address to the nation, the Shah appointed a defacto military government headed by General Gholamreza Azhari, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. During his address, the Shah "pledged himself to correct the 'errors' of the past, to fight against corruption, redress

injustices and restore civil liberties after the departure of the military government." He ended by saying, "I know everything about why you have given your lives."⁴⁸ The public confession by the Shah ended his credibility and strengthened the resolve of the demonstrators. The Soviets subsequently broke their official silence on the events in Iran for the first time. President Brezhnev in response to a question by a Pravda correspondent regarding the possibility of Western interference in the events of Iran replied:

"The Soviet Union, which maintains traditional, neighborly relations with Iran, resolutely states that it is against foreign interference in Iran's internal affairs by anyone, in any form and under any pretext. The events taking place there constitute a purely internal affair, and the questions involved in them should be decided by the Iranians themselves. All states should abide in this matter by the principles in the U.N. Charter and a number of other basic international documents, and should respect the sovereignty and independence of Iran and its people.

It must be clear also that any interference, especially military, in the affairs of Iran--would be regarded by the U.S.S.R. as a matter affecting its security interests."⁴⁹

There were several factors in the Soviet debate which resulted in this decisive shift in Moscow's policy. Certainly the decision to become involved in the Iranian upheaval was a result of careful consideration for ten months of the potential risks and gains, the costs and the benefits in following such a policy. Unfortunately, there is no Freedom of Information Act in the Soviet Union which would enable one to follow the course of the debates. However, some of the possible factors which weighed on the minds of the decision makers are described below.

1. Soviet Potential Gains

The Brezhnev statement reported on 19 November was designed to introduce ambiguity into the United States policy planning and to enhance Soviet options in the Gulf crisis. If the warning was successful in deterring a U.S. intervention, a condition which was highly unlikely by this time, then Moscow could and did use the statement at a later date to exploit the Soviet role in defending the Revolution. In the meantime, there were several potential gains to be registered if Moscow successfully influenced the demise of the Shah and the rise of a pro-Soviet or neutralist Iranian regime which would result in:

1. A tremendous setback for the United States in terms of prestige and foreign policy. Iran, while enjoying the benefits of the "special relationship" with the U.S., was one of the strategic "two Pillars" of the Nixon doctrine for providing peace and stability in the Persian Gulf. The Shah acted as a U.S. proxy and gendarme in the region and was dedicated to enhancing Iran's modernization and strategic role in Southwest Asia. The loss of Iran would cause other pro-Western nations in the region to reconsider the political reliability of a strong association with the Americans or, conversely, denying the Soviet Union equal status in regional affairs.

2. A significant change in the balance of power in the Middle East. A U.S. diminished role would most likely result from a change in the Iranian government even if the new regime were to be neutralist or pro-Western in their outlook.

3. An increase in the security of the U.S.S.R.'s border by the lessening or removal of U.S. military presence. It was possible to imagine a situation where the Iranian arms buildup would be reduced or halted, and that part or all of the U.S. logistics bases and intelligence installations would be dismantled. The subsequent loss of U.S. presence would result in a decline in Iranian military power and influence in the Gulf region.

4. An increased opportunity for Soviet involvement and influence in Iran through security, military, economic and trade associations. It would appear likely that a vacuum created by

the United States' downgraded presence could be filled by a Soviet neighbor willing to cooperate with a new friendly regime.

2. Moscow's Risks

In the event that the Shah were to survive the internal threat that existed in November 1978, the Brezhnev regime could point to the friendship, cooperation and obvious mutual interests that were promoted by the November 19 warning message. However, it was only after the wave of popular protest had grown to a significant level and the U.S. had demonstrated a weak reaction to the Iranian affair, that this policy line was adopted. There were risks in publishing this statement which could lead to:

1. U.S. military or political intervention to actively restore the Shah to his position of absolute power much as they did in the 1953 Mossadeq coup. However, the Carter Administration's cautious attitude and timid response to the Iranian crisis to-date augured well for positive Soviet actions.⁵⁰

2. The undoing of economic links patiently developed over two decades between Iran and the U.S.S.R. Those links included the development of a substantial natural gas pipeline system which was scheduled for enormous expansion. Soviet and Iranian long-term plans for this pipeline system (IGAT-2) included the eventual transfer of 1.65 billion cubic feet/day of Iranian natural gas to the U.S.S.R. which would then reroute Soviet natural gas to Eastern and Western Europe while collecting cash payments for imputed transfer fees.⁵¹

3. Potential problems in relations with other states and their National Liberation regimes including Afghanistan, the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), Libya, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) who viewed the Shah's activist Gulf policies with alarm and who might react negatively to Soviet lack of active support for the peoples' movement in Iran.

4. The cooling of relations with Iran might enhance developing Iranian-PRC relations. The Shah had established diplomatic relations with Peking in 1971 in an effort to balance Soviet presence in the Persian Gulf. The U.S.S.R. was very disturbed by the growing Chinese involvement in Iran which was viewed as a threat to Soviet interests. In 1978 Chinese leaders increased

their diplomatic efforts in Iran which culminated with an official state visit by PRC Chairman Hua Kuo-Feng in late August. This visit was widely denounced in the Soviet press as an attempt by the Chinese to disrupt Soviet-Iranian relations as well as expand PRC bilateral agreements with Iran and other Middle Eastern states.⁵²

Events which followed the 19 November statement demonstrated to the Soviets that a turning point had been reached in Iran. The gathering momentum of the public reaction to the Shah's regime and the inability of the military government to quell the uprising was registered in the Soviet press. For the first time, denouncements of the Shah were printed in early December as the Revolution was labelled "antimonarchist" and "antifascist." The Soviets shifted their emphasis to active support of the Revolution which was consequently called the "Peoples' Uprising." Increasing Soviet emphasis and an intensified propaganda campaign were waged which aimed at placing the responsibility for the Shah's errant behavior squarely on the United States. In the words of one Soviet political observer: "For ruling America there is no Iran as a country . . . In general, there is no Iran for the Iranians, but there is an Iran for the Americans."⁵³

The dominant themes in Soviet radio and press reports that emerged during November and December 1978 and which received increasing emphasis in the weeks ahead included:

1. the legitimacy and growing virulence of the National Front-led Peoples' Uprising in Iran;
2. the increasingly anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist, anti-Western nature of the revolt and the unity and cohesiveness of all factions involved in the Revolution;

3. the threat of the U.S. fomented reactionary forces and the increasing likelihood of a military coup d'état by pro-Shah forces;

4. the friendly, cooperative nature of the benevolent neighbor to the north.

C. CRISIS AND VICTORY

The Pahlavi Monarchy literally crumbled in the last days of 1978. The Shah's military government failed to maintain order or to wrest control of the cities from the demonstrators. On 1 January 1979 the Azhari government collapsed. The Shah cast about anxiously seeking to form a civilian government that could save the monarchy and end the chaos in Iran. It was during this time period that the Russian version of détente, or the continuation of the "ideological struggle" was most visible and vocal in Iran.

1. The Soviet Propaganda Machinery and Its Products

The Soviets have been saying for several years to whoever would listen that, while détente required a certain amount of East-West cooperation and the reduction of overall global tensions that could threaten to escalate into a nuclear confrontation between the superpowers, the ideological struggle would continue unabated. While American administrations assumed that the ideological differences would be aired in appropriate forums in a business-like fashion, the Kremlin clearly had something else in mind. To the U.S.S.R., ideological struggle means the continuous waging of war by other means and they have acted accordingly.⁵⁴ In Iran, this struggle was

intensified during the critical months of December 1978 and January 1979 by every means available to the Soviets including:

1. Persian-language radio broadcasts from Baku, known as the National Voice of Iran (NVOI). For some seventeen years this station broadcast, along with a second station that was allied with the underground Tudeh party, daily unrestrained attacks on the Shah and on "American imperialism." It has been noted by one observer that "ever since the Shah's fall appeared likely, the National Voice had doubled its broadcast time."55

2. Standard Moscow radio broadcasts in Persian, Arabic and English. These broadcasts were used to keep the Iranian and Gulf people aware of domestic and international events and reactions to the Revolution. The Moscow-originated programs included commentary, newscasts, round-table discussions, answers to "listeners'" questions and official world reactions to the Iranian situation. The crescendo of critical and inflammatory messages delivered during the crisis focused on the threat of outside imperialist forces such as the CIA and Israeli security service (Mossad), and the U.S. "Gunboat Diplomacy" represented by the Allied and American naval task force present in the Gulf which was armed with "nuclear bombs."56

3. Daily Soviet published news articles in newspapers, journals, magazines and the official Soviet news agency TASS in English and Russian. These forums were used to communicate every sort of horror, concern, threat and innuendo to the broader global audience. The official printed media was used to transmit loyal oppositionist statements from inside Iran and around the globe in support of the now familiar themes of the U.S. imperialist threat, Zionist involvement and the impending Chilean "Pinochet-style" military coup d'état. Similarly, the media was used to indoctrinate Soviet citizens regarding the National Liberation movement in Iran and to maintain the spectre of the American threat to the peace-loving peoples of the Soviet Union and the world. When charged by the American government with interference and incitement of the Iranian Revolution, the Russian press responded that "in fact, the Soviet press and radio are merely transmitting information on the (Iranian) events, often drawn from American sources."57

2. Covert Interferences

The range of Soviet clandestine involvement in the Iranian Revolution has been widely discussed in the West. Soviet attempts to interfere in Iran have been manifested by numerous means including:

1. Arms support and military training for guerrilla forces conducted in consonance with the PLO.⁵⁸

2. Soviet infiltration of leftist organizations in Iran and attempts to organize and operate communist cells in the Iranian Armed Forces.⁵⁹

3. Soviet produced and distributed propaganda and revolutionary materials, leaflets and pamphlets from various sources including Moscow's Teheran embassy.⁶⁰

4. The Moscow funded, organized and sponsored Tudeh party with its official newspaper Mardom and the promotion of the Communist Party of Iran's (CPI) platforms and calls for unity among all leftist forces in Iran.⁶¹

The events of January and February 1979 are covered extensively in various sources and will not be detailed here.⁶² The Soviet response to this affair was to proclaim solidarity with the Revolutionary Forces in Iran while continuing to hammer at the incessant nature of the reactionary imperialist threat presented by the United States. Moscow's motives are undoubtedly linked to her objectives in the region to reduce Western influence, enhance the U.S.S.R.'s influence and to improve Soviet security. The fall of the Shah and decline in American presence which followed are important gains, but the volatile nature of Iran in the aftermath of Ayotollah Khomeini's return is as much a constraint as it is an opportunity. For the Soviets, the revolutionary process is still in-progress in Iran. The ousting of the Shah, the creation of a provisional government under Mehdi Bazargan, and the eventual declaration of the Islamic Republic of Iran represented only the initial stages of the enduring struggle for the creation of a truly democratic, socialist, classless state based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism. Accordingly, Moscow's policy towards Iran continues

to encourage the development of their Revolution while attempting to strengthen the Soviet Union's political, economic, cultural and military ties with Teheran. These endeavors have proceeded in concert with a vigorous effort to undermine moderate Iranian attitudes regarding the United States. The Iranian leadership is constantly chided to maintain a vigorous anti-U.S. public position to prevent the resumption of imperialist influence in the region.

D. THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

During the course of the Bazargan leadership in 1979, and throughout the Bani-Sadr presidency, the Soviets have continued their ideological and physical support of the Iranian Revolution. The Soviet press has maintained its call for vigilance against the "conspiracy of elements that support the idea of a rightist coup in Iran" under the leadership of the United States, especially during the period of the U.S. hostage crisis.⁶³ A second theme that the Kremlin has pursued is to continuously call for inclusion of the Tudeh party as a viable entity in the Revolution by reminding the Iranian government of the "considerable importance" of the contributions of "other factions" in the 1978-79 Revolution.⁶⁴ Thirdly, while generally praising the Ayotollah Khomeini and the role of the clergy, Moscow has sought to remind the Iranian people that: "despite its great influence, the clergy is not the only opposition force in the country. The traditional organizer of the anti-Shah, anti-American actions is the National Front, headed by K. Sanjabi, a prominent leader

of the Democratic Front."⁶⁵ Fourth, a recurring theme in Soviet strategy is the building of solidarity and unity between Moscow and Teheran and offering to strengthen these ties. The Soviet party line, stated repeatedly in all media, generally reflects this theme as demonstrated by the following example:

"The Soviet Union has invariably sympathized with the Iranian people, their problems, difficulties, and worries, and their fight for a brighter future. The U.S.S.R. resolutely sided with the Iranian Revolution and did quite a lot to prevent foreign intervention in Iranian affairs. Naturally, it did not have the slightest intention of interfering in them itself and now after the triumph of the Iranian Revolution the Soviet Union is prepared to help by all means to strengthen and extend good-neighborly relations with Iran."⁶⁶

1. The 1921 Treaty, A Useful Document

As stated above, the 1921 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation has proven to be a valuable and timeless instrument in Soviet and Iranian foreign relations. The November 1978 Brezhnev warning, although it did not specifically mention that 1921 Treaty, was a clear reference to this international legal document. In January, lest any doubt remain, Isvestiia linked the Brezhnev statement and the Treaty and described the 1921 document as "operative even now."⁶⁷ Since that time, Moscow has repeatedly sought to remind Iran that it considers the Treaty a valid legal basis for Soviet-Iranian relations.

In February 1979, a Persian-language broadcast to Iran stated that the Treaty

". . . was the first equal rights treaty that Iran signed with a big power based on Leninist principles of non-interference in affairs of others . . . as you are aware, the

Soviet Union has consistently followed Lenin's policy of good-neighborly relations and cooperation with Iran. The Soviet-Iran Treaty signed in 1921, the anniversary of which is now occurring, is a clear example of this policy."⁶⁸

Similarly, an August 1979 newspaper report asserted that "articles five and six guaranteed the security and integrity of both sides" and constituted a "serious warning to world reaction" which has on several occasions encroached upon Iran.⁶⁹

Despite the fact that Iran's ruling Revolutionary Council abrogated articles five and six of the 1921 Treaty in January 1980 in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a February Moscow broadcast in Persian declared that the policy of "equality of rights, mutual respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in one another's affairs, the principles of peace, cooperation and good-neighborliness . . . set during the first years of Soviet rule, is manifested in the 1921 Soviet-Iranian agreement."⁷⁰

It can be of little comfort to the present Iranian government that the Kremlin resurfaced the 1921 Treaty under the pretext of defending Iran's independence. Nor can the Iranians afford to ignore the fact that Soviet coverage of developments in Iran has increasingly sought to depict a situation comparable to the one purported to have prompted Soviet "fraternal assistance" to Afghanistan. That is, one in which a revolutionary regime on the border of the Soviet Union is being threatened by outside forces led by the United States.⁷¹

2. Iranian-Soviet Post-Revolutionary Relations

Iranian reaction to Moscow's foreign policy strategy has been mixed, at best. Under Khomeini's watchful eye, Iran has pursued a policy of non-alignment which includes a willingness to expand trade with the Russians, while criticizing them for their December 1979 invasion of Afghanistan.⁷² The Soviet Union has responded by maintaining a significant degree of flexibility in their relationship with Iran. Moscow has alternately praised and condemned various Iranian positions, factions and leaders. The Kremlin has consistently used the "carrot and stick" approach with Teheran raising issues for cooperation such as the utilization of Soviet trade routes to thwart the U.S. sponsored economic blockade which followed the 1979 taking of U.S. embassy personnel as hostages, calls for increased economic cooperation, and offers of military assistance. Alternatively, Soviet threats have been issued covering topics as varied as Moscow's willingness to provide assistance to Iranian ethnic minorities, the possible reprisals against Afghan counter-revolutionary sanctuaries inside Iran, and the Soviet intent, if necessary, to provide military protection and security for Russian diplomatic personnel and property in Iran.⁷³

Soviet-Iranian relations were particularly tense following the 27 December 1980 attack on Moscow's embassy in Teheran in which thousands of Iranian protesters marched on the embassy to mark the one year anniversary of the Soviet invasion of neighboring Afghanistan. During the march, the embassy compound

was overrun by demonstrators who damaged property, threatened employees, and burned the Russian flag. Soviet protest notes to Iranian officials vehemently denounced the "piratic attack" and the "failure of the government" to take effective and timely measures to protect the extra-territoriality of the Soviet embassy.⁷⁴ Ultimately, the Iranian ambassador was summoned to the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Foreign Affairs where a formal protest was lodged. In conclusion, the protest emphasized that

"The Soviet Union, as before, is ready to build its relations with Iran on the basis of good-neighborliness and mutual respect. At the same time no one should have any doubt that it will have to protect the legitimate rights and interests of the Soviet state and its citizens if the Iranian Government does not wish or finds itself unable to perform its duty regarding the ensurance of the safety of the Soviet institutions and their personnel in Iran."⁷⁵

The Iranian government did not respond officially to this note and the incident has passed.

Although the monarchy has been removed and significant benefits derived, the evolution of the Soviet-Iranian association was, and remains incomplete. The Soviet Union continues to work for changes in Iranian behavior that will enhance Moscow's long range strategic goals. It was with the Southwest Asian objectives in mind, that the U.S.S.R. was striving towards in 1980 when a Soviet ally invaded Iran in a bid to topple and remove the source of Sh'ite agitation in the Gulf. The Iraqi invasion created a potentially serious dilemma for Soviet leaders who were faced with the prospect of having to choose sides or stay out of a conflict on their southern border over which they exercised little control. If it were to become necessary to support one of the

combatants, which side will best serve Soviet aims in the region? The Soviet problem of net assessment in this continuing war is the next topic on which this analysis is focused.

IV. THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

A. SOVIET-IRAQI RELATIONS

The 1958 overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq marked the turning point of Soviet policy toward the Arab Middle East. From 1958 to the present, the Kremlin has pursued positive regional goals directed towards the growth of Soviet influence in Southwest Asia, as opposed to the basic defensive posture assumed during the previous Cold War period. Although erratic, the Soviet Union has pursued a general policy of friendship toward Iraq which has continued for over two decades.⁷⁶ The Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), founded in 1934, first cooperated with Abdel Karim Qasim, the army officer who led the 1958 coup which overthrew the Royal Government, and subsequently colluded with the Baath party which came to power in 1968.

During the period 1968-1973 Iraqi-Soviet relations reached a zenith and the ICP came as near as it has ever come to sharing power with the Baathists. Then President Hasan al-Bakr visited the U.S.S.R. in September 1972 and concluded a fifteen-year Soviet-Iraqi Treaty of Friendship. In 1973, at the prodding of the Soviets, the ICP and Baath formed a National Front along with the main Kurdish ethnic party, which agreed to divide the ruling authority of the country and guaranteed all parties acceptance and participation in the central government. This

coalition weathered the ensuing ups and downs of Soviet-Iraqi relations during the turbulent period 1973-1978.

The Kremlin followed a very delicate policy line during these years of balancing relations among all Arab nations.⁷⁷ For example, in the aftermath of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the Soviets supported Egypt and Syria in their efforts to reach a negotiated settlement with Israel. Iraq opposed this settlement and organized a "Rejection Front" which included the Palestine Liberation Organization, Libya and Jordan. Next, in 1975, the U.S.S.R. declined to support Iraq in its ongoing dispute with Iran over the Shatt al-Arab international water boundary and disagreed with Baghdad on how best to solve the Iranian-supported Kurdish conflict. When the Algerian-mediated Iranian-Iraqi Treaty concerning these two issues was signed in March 1975, the Soviets reproached the Iraqis for acting without consulting the U.S.S.R. under the terms of the 1972 Treaty.⁷⁸

Despite these differences, Soviet-Iraqi military relations grew stronger in the period 1973-1978. Military leaders of the two countries exchanged visits and Soviet naval units first visited the Iraqi port of Um Qasr. Soviet military aid continued to grow as did Iraq's prestige and importance. Subsequent to Egyptian President Sadat's "traitorous" visit to Jerusalem in November 1977, Soviet arms flows increased to Baghdad and included Mig-23 fighters, TU-22 bombers, IL-76 transport planes and sophisticated missiles. (See Table 4-1

for a comparison of arms transfers conducted in Iraq and Iran for the period 1974-78.)

A serious breakdown in Soviet-Iraqi relations, which led to the demise of the ICP-Baath coalition, occurred as a result of events which developed beginning in 1978. The first sign of impending difficulties was the Iraqi request to the Soviet embassy in Baghdad to relocate. This embassy was near enough to the Iraqi presidential palace to electronically eavesdrop on discussions in the palace. When the Soviets refused to move, the Iraqis cut electricity and water to the embassy until the Soviets complied with the request. In May 1978, twenty-one Iraqi soldiers were executed for allegedly attempting to organize communist cells in the Armed Forces. Those executed were subject to the provisions of an Iraqi law which forbids non-Baathist political activities within the Armed Forces. In July 1978 this same law was extended retroactively to all those who had left the army since 1968. Additionally, the Iraqi government conducted a sweeping campaign outside the Armed Forces against ICP sympathizers. There have reportedly been more than 20,000 arrests in the past few years. Moreover, there have been neither trials nor sentences, and according to Amnesty International, those arrested have been tortured--some to the point of death.⁷⁹

Another irritant in Soviet-Iraqi relations was the Iraqi aid to the Eritrean Nationalists fighting the Soviet-backed Marxist military regime in Ethiopia. On May 25, 1978, it was

TABLE 4-1

Value of Arms Transfers
Cumulative 1974-1978
By Major Supplier and Recipient Country
(Millions of Current 1977 Dollars)

Supplier:	Recipients:	
	<u>Iran</u>	<u>Iraq</u>
United States	6700	
Soviet Union	310	3600
France	200	430
United Kingdom	420	20
Federal Republic of Germany . . .	470	150
Czechoslovakia		90
Italy	350	70
Poland		30
People's Republic of China . . .		10
Canada	50	
Others	240	900
Total	8700	5300

Source: U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1969-1978 (WMEAT), Washington, D.C., 1980.

reported in the Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Siyassa--without being contradicted by Iraq--that then Vice President Saddam Hussain had threatened to break off diplomatic relations with Moscow if the Soviets persisted in providing massive aid to Ethiopia.⁸⁰ Baghdad had denied the Soviet airlift to Ethiopia, refueling or staging rights in Iraq. In a July 9 interview in Newsweek, Hussain stated that "The Soviet Union will not be satisfied until the whole world becomes communist."

The Soviets remained calm throughout this troubled period and stressed the importance of Soviet-Iraqi mutual relations rather than differences. Saddam Hussain traveled to Moscow in December 1978 and signed two new agreements on economic cooperation. In a joint communique issued December 12, 1978, the two governments condemned the Camp David peace process and called for "unity of all forces in the Arab world opposed to the policy of capitulation" and hinted at increased military cooperation between the states.⁸¹

Moscow's goal in recent years appears to be to retain influence in Iraq without making any serious new commitments. Although Iraq remains a Soviet ally, the prospects for Moscow's influence in Iraq may be viewed as diminishing. Following the 1979 Soviet invasion in Afghanistan, Iraq joined other Arab states in roundly condemning the Soviet involvement in an Islamic sovereign state.⁸² Iraqi persecution of the ICP has continued and the party newspaper has been suppressed.⁸³ The

Soviets have been unable to do little more than broadcast support for the ICP's pleas for unity and cooperation among Iraqi forces and to call for an end to the persecution of communists in Iraq.

Nowhere has this declining relationship become more evident than in the areas of economic trade and military sales. As a result of a 1980 Soviet-Iraqi trade protocol, Soviet imports of Iraqi products during the first six months of the calendar year increased to 177 million rubles compared with 122 million during the same period in 1979. However, Iraq's imports from the Soviet Union during the January-June portion of 1980 declined drastically to 315 million rubles compared to a 465 million trade volume for the first half of 1979.⁸⁴ Equally illuminating, is Iraq's efforts to diversify their foreign military sources of supply. The U.S.S.R., in one analyst's words, "has ceased to be Iraq's sole supplier of military equipment," in fact, "The Soviet share of Iraq's military imports fell from 95 percent in 1972 to 63 percent in 1979."⁸⁵ This decline in Soviet prestige and influence in Iraq is an important variable that must be factored into an assessment of the Soviet strategic planning in terms of the present Gulf conflict.

B. COUNTRY COMPARISON

Soviet decision making is influenced by a multitude of factors. The initial step in determining the selection of a policy in the Iranian-Iraqi conflict is to compare these two

nations in several categories to determine the current and potential value of each nation to the Soviet Union. What is the military strength of the belligerents? What is their economic potential? Are they geo-strategically significant to Soviet short-term, mid-range, or long-term goals? These questions suggest the type of information necessary to compile in order to perform a net assessment for input to policy-level planners. The factors that will be reviewed in this assessment include: geography, population, economics, oil and national security. The data compiled for this analysis are listed in Appendix A, "A Country Comparison," and Appendix B, "The Military Order of Battle."

The geo-strategic location of Iran would make it the overwhelming favorite among Soviet military planners. Iran has approximately 1250 miles of border with the U.S.S.R. and an additional 400 miles with the Soviet-sponsored government in Afghanistan. It is a riparian state with borders on both the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf and sits astride the Straits of Hormuz. With its nearly 2000 miles of sea coast and seven major ports, Iran is ideally suited to provide support for naval and marine activity. The Persian land mass is nearly four times as large as Iraq and offers three times as much agricultural land. Iraq is virtually a land-locked country whose nearest border to the Soviet Union is 150 miles across Iranian or Turkish airspace.

Population as a variable is difficult to assess. However, in terms of sheer numbers, Iran's population of 37.5 million is nearly three times the size of Iraq, a country of 13 million people. There are numerous ethnic groups in each country with several major languages, cultures and religions represented. In terms of religion, both nations are overwhelmingly Islamic with Shi'a Muslims numerically superior in both states. Iran is primarily a Persian nation while Iraq is an Arab state. Both nations are populated by large working and peasant classes, moderate middle classes, and a very small elite structure.

Economically speaking, Iran and Iraq can be categorized as developing countries using their oil industries to finance development. Their respective industrial bases, prior to the war were small, but growing. Agriculture typically employs one half of the labor force and both nations are dependent upon food imports. Soviet economic aid figures for Iran and Iraq are shown in Table 4-2, and selected Soviet trade figures are cited in Table 4-3. In terms of investment, Moscow has provided more aid to Iran in the twenty year period cited than it has to Iraq. Additionally, since the Western economic sanctions were imposed against Iran in the wake of the U.S. hostage affair, Soviet exports to Iran have reportedly increased from 65 million rubles during the itme period January-June 1979 to 165 million rubles in the same period in 1980.⁸⁶ However,

TABLE 4-2

Communist Economic
Aid Commitments
(Million U.S. \$)

A. Iran:

Economic Aid	<u>1958-73</u>	<u>1974-79</u>	<u>Total</u>
U.S.S.R.	790	375	1165
Eastern Europe	540	145	685
Total	1330	520	1850

B. Iraq:

U.S.S.R.	555	150	705
Eastern Europe	445	50	495
China	45	0	45
Total	1045	200	1245

Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Communist Aid Activities in Non-Communist Less Developed Countries, 1979 and 1954-79, ER 80-10318U, October 1980.

TABLE 4-3

Soviet Trade With Iran, Iraq
and the Middle East 1973-77
(Million Roubles)

A. Imports:	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978*</u>
Iran	139.6	229.9	228.2	226.7	283.4	306.2
Iraq	190.6	270.8	325.4	372.9	321.0	481.4
Middle East	846.1	1273.2	1396.0	1298.5	1533.7	1512.2
M.E.% of World	5.4	6.7	5.2	4.5	5.1	4.3
B. Exports:						
Iran	137.3	265.8	281.5	217.9	424.1	632.6
Iraq	141.5	182.3	270.8	341.6	281.0	448.0
Middle East	920.0	1230.8	1266.9	1327.3	1555.5	1971.2
M.E.& of World	5.8	5.9	5.3	4.7	4.7	5.9

*Projected

Source: Middle East Economic Digest, Vol. 22, no. 43, 27 October 1978
Reprint of Moscow Narodny Bank (London) figures.

these figures are relatively small when compared to the global Soviet aid and trade effort. Certainly neither nation can be considered a possible major trading partner in the near or long-term.

Prior to the Revolution, Iran was a substantial oil, natural gas and refined products producer. The demonstrated peak production (6.2 million barrels per day) and substantial proven reserves of oil would make Iran a valuable ally. When one adds the large natural gas capability (4,520 million cubic feet per day) and known reserves (377 trillion cubic feet) Iran's value increases significantly. The late Shah's economic programs were designed to get Iran into all phases of the petroleum market which included building a large refinery capacity (800,000 barrels per day in 1977), a fleet of tankers to deliver crude and refined products to consumer markets, an elaborate pipeline system for regional deliveries, and procuring a Navy capable of protecting these Iranian assets while controlling the vital Straits of Hormuz.

On the eve of the war, Iran's production of oil had dwindled to only 1.2 MBD, of which 700,000 barrels/day were used for domestic consumption and only 500,000 barrels/day were exported.⁸⁷ Furthermore, after the Revolution, the delivery of natural gas to the Soviet Union dropped from nearly 1.0 billion cubic feet per day to 0.4 billion. By early 1980, gas deliveries had declined further to 150 million CFD or 15 percent of the volume established in a 1970 trade contract. In late 1979, Iran

demanded a renegotiation of the fifteen year contract seeking:

1. a fivefold increase in price from \$.75 per thousand cubic feet to \$3.63;
2. the contracted volume be reduced to 0.25 billion CFD;
3. payments be made in hard currencies.

The Russians agreed in March 1980 to increase prices to \$2.50 per thousand cubic feet and to reduce the contracted delivery amounts to 0.25 billion CFD, however, the hard currency issue has not been resolved. Eventually, a flood and landslide cut off all deliveries to the U.S.S.R. in March 1980 and Iran is not making any effort to resume deliveries until the price issue is resolved.⁸⁸

Since the outbreak of the war, both Iraq and Iran have been able to bomb and shell each other's oil facilities almost at will. Neither side appears able to defend these oil installations and there has been substantial damage to pipelines, maritime loading terminals, refineries, pumps, and storage tanks. If one assumes that the war will not result in great structural damage to the oil fields themselves, normal production capacity should be resumed in Iraq in three to twelve months depending on the degree of damage to Iraqi production and transport facilities.⁸⁹ In Iran, damage from the war has been compounded by mismanagement and the Revolution which makes it difficult to predict when and if Iran will be able to restore its pre-war and pre-Revolutionary production capacity.

One author has described the Iran-Iraq War as a study in the "futility of arms."⁹⁰ Both sides have proven their

inability to defend oil facilities, protect their civilian populations, or achieve a military solution to this conflict. The war has become in John Campbell's words "a phony war, a page thirteen war" in which neither side is able to achieve victory.⁹¹ Six months after the September 22, 1980 initiation of full-scale hostilities by Iraq, there is no end in sight and the costs of the conflict continue to climb. The war may leave Iran and Iraq without an offensive military capability or effective defense forces. For all of their arms expenditures, neither side has been able to affect the course of the war or cause political change in the opposing nation.

From a military perspective, the performance of Iraq has been dismal in the air, ineffective on the ground, and invisible at sea. Despite the massive expenditures on arms, and military aid received from the Soviet Union, Saddam Hussain's boast that Iraq would settle the issue of military supremacy in the Gulf "for the next fifty years," is an unfulfilled fantasy.⁹² Iran's actions, although not impressive in light of their large investments in equipment and training during the past decade, have surprised many analysts and shocked Iraq. Following two years of internal chaos and the dissolution of external supply support, Iran has demonstrated sufficient defensive capability to frustrate Iraq's military plans.

Appendix B lists the military order of battle for the two belligerents at the outbreak of hostilities. Despite Iran's seeming numerical superiority, the sides are well-matched.

Iraq has enjoyed several advantages in this conflict including the element of surprise, a lengthy planning period, and well-equipped and maintained forces with which to prosecute the war. Their lines of supply and communication are shorter, and Iraq's transportation system was in good working order. Despite these advantages and an 80,000-man ground attack force trained and equipped with Soviet arms, Iraq has been unable to control the tempo of the war and achieve an early military victory.⁹³

For Iraq, regardless of the outcome of the fighting, the future may be bleak. Any peace settlement which involves Iraqi withdrawal from occupied territories might prove the end of the Hussain government.⁹⁴ Even limited victory in Khuzestan province may mean eventual defeat because of the vulnerability of Iraq to Iranian air attack, political agitation of ethnic forces in the river plateau area, and protracted guerrilla warfare with the revengeful Iranians. Total victory and the replacement of the Khomeini regime with a moderate government which would cooperate with Iraq is an unlikely prospect. Most likely, Saddam Hussain's attempt to gain "fifty years of military supremacy" in the Persian Gulf will end with fifty more years of hatred and instability and could spell personal disaster for the Iraqi leader.⁹⁵

Iran has been characterized as "the sick man of the Gulf," yet the war with Iraq has demonstrated that it is premature to discount Iran as a military and political force in the region.⁹⁶

At the outset of the war, Iran had only one armored division in the Khuzestan area to face the 80,000-man Iraqi force.⁹⁷ Iran's military hierarchy had been decimated by revolutionary purges, their military forces were in a state of disrepair, and the reliability of its remaining manpower and equipment was questionable. Despite these shortcomings, the Iranian air and ground forces have managed to frustrate Iraqi war objectives, attack military and economic targets in the invader's homeland, and bring the war to its present stalemate on all fronts. Meanwhile, the Iranian Navy has faced only limited opposition and has played an almost insignificant role in the fighting.

The results of the war have been devastating for Iran.⁹⁸ Although the political factions have coalesced to oppose the invaders, the truce between internal factions may be temporary. The economic system is devastated, the oil system is virtually destroyed, energy supplies are dwindling, food is scarce, and the national debt is enormous. Iran has been isolated in the region as a result of its revolutionary fervor and willingness to export instability. Internationally, Iran is in need of allies who can provide economic and military aid in order to sustain the present war efforts and to help rebuild the nation. The prospects for Iranian military victory are bleak; a prolonged stalemate or defeat is more likely. In either circumstance the collapse of the fundamentalist government will probably ensue and the internal disintegration process is apt to erupt into full-scale civil war.

C. LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

In an attempt to review the Soviet foreign policy decision process as it applies to the Iranian-Iraqi War, it is important to consider the costs and risks of policy implementation applied to several levels of analysis. There are three levels that will be addressed in this study. The first level is that of the nation-state. From the perspective of internal forces, what elements are to be considered in Soviet policy selection? What are the domestic constraints that apply to foreign policy? The second level for review is the region. How are local actors viewed in the Soviet decision process? What are the pluses and minuses in pursuing a policy line at this level? Finally, at the global level of analysis, what is the overall effect of a Soviet response to the Iran-Iraq War on the international system? How does this level compare in importance to the region and nation levels? The levels of analysis approach applied to the policy selection question is a basic step towards comprehending current Soviet policy regarding Iran and Iraq.

1. The Nation-State Level

In previous sections we have discussed two prominent ingredients in the Soviet policy recipe, namely, Moscow's objectives in the Middle East and the power inventory of Iran and Iraq. What remains to be described at this level are the domestic constraints that affect Soviet decision making. These constraints can be viewed in the same framework as the overall-objectives discussion which centers on politics, economics, ideology, culture and the military.

In the economic realm, the Soviet Union is presently engaged in a delicate balancing act in the Iranian-Iraqi War. They appear to be performing the inevitable calculations of potential gains and losses while attempting to maintain some measure of control in the region. The U.S.S.R. has found itself in a situation where anything it might say or do about the conflict would be regarded by the Iranians and the Iraqis as taking sides. Increases in aid with treaty-partner- and sometimes-ally-Iraq would threaten Iran who would perceive such aid as Soviet assistance designed to kill Iranian citizens and subdivide the Iranian nation. Bilateral relations with Iraq will suffer however, if no aid is forthcoming. Moreover, Moscow would then be open to charges that they do not honor their treaty commitments. A small-scale aid program to Iraq would force Iraqi President Hussain to look elsewhere for support, which he is already doing.⁹⁹ Finally, any visible aid program to Iraq's enemy, Iran, would most likely result in expulsion of the Soviets from Iraq.

These demands for politically calculated economic efforts must be balanced with domestic difficulties which plague the Soviet economy. The United States National Foreign Assessment Center has provided a grim outlook picture for the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁰ The Soviet economy slowed to a crawl in 1978-79. The average annual growth rate at 2.1 percent was the lowest for any period since World War II. Output declined in agriculture and registered only modest gains in industry, construction,

transportation, communications, trade and services. Factor productivity registered negative growth in 1978-79. There has been a virtual leveling-off of oil output, a decline in coal production, a major rise in raw material costs, and a decline in Russian investment. The Soviet economic problems are structurally rooted and will restrict growth through much of the 1980's. The domestic condition of the Soviet economy, coupled with the political sensitivities involved in aid and trade issues between Iraq and Iran, will be important factors in Soviet policy decisions.

Another significant domestic constraint to foreign policy is the large Central Asian Muslim population in the Soviet Union and the links between these people and the Muslims in Iran and Iraq. These ties are both religious and ethnic in nature and are active in the Soviet Union. The two major religious branches of Islam, Sunni and Shi'a, are well represented in the U.S.S.R. Ninety-five percent of Soviet Muslims are Turkic, Iranian and Caucasian Sunnis who have maintained continuous, though limited, contact with the religious centers abroad such as Mecca and Medina. The second branch of Islam is represented by the three million Soviet Shiites whose spiritual centers are located in Iraq (Najaf and Karbala) and Iran (Meshad and Qom).¹⁰¹ Soviet Muslims also identify with Muslim brethren abroad through ethnic kinship and language. The southern borders of the U.S.S.R. are purely artificial and do not reflect any natural geographic or national divisions. These bonds of

religion and ethnic kinship have made for a complicated relationship between Soviet Muslims and the Islamic world outside its borders.¹⁰²

The Muslims of Central Asia are well aware of the events in Afghanistan, Iran and the Iraqi-Iranian War. Persian broadcasts originating in Tabriz and Teheran are followed with interest by Soviet Azeris and Turkmen.¹⁰³ The resurgence of Islam, the anti-imperialist nature, and the phenomenon of Khomeinism, have sensitized the peoples of Central Asia to the events in Iran. Although the impact of these influences is difficult to measure, it is an important factor in Soviet domestic politics and can be destabilizing to Soviet unity.

As discussed earlier in this report, ideology plays a secondary role to politics in state-to-state relations with Iran and Iraq. However, historical ties with leftist forces in these two countries and the importance of Moscow as the fatherland of Marxist-Leninist thought act together to constrain Soviet foreign policy. Ideology is a legitimizing factor in internal Soviet politics as well as in international relations. The Soviet leaders base their claim to loyalty and obedience on their ability to correctly interpret and execute the "laws of history" as defined by Marx and Lenin.¹⁰⁴ Ideology, justifies the power of the Russian political elite and communist doctrine is an important ingredient in shaping Soviet foreign policy. Therefore, the leadership cannot abandon the leftist forces in Iran and Iraq or be viewed as discarding communist doctrine

entirely in political relations. To do so would entail a domestic risk by decreasing the legitimacy of the present leadership.

Militarily, for the Soviet Union 1980 was a very active year. There were 80,000-100,000 Soviet troops engaged in serious fighting in Afghanistan, scores of advisors abroad in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East, thirty-one Soviet divisions stationed in the Warsaw Pact countries and many more located on the Sino-Soviet border. The Soviet Navy spent approximately 60,000 ship days deployed out of area, Soviet military expenditures approached \$175 billion, and arms transfers totalled nearly \$10 billion.¹⁰⁵ In addition, there were several important events which created an atmosphere of uncertainty in Soviet border regions:

1. As a result of the December 1979 Soviet invasion, President Carter declared in his January 1980 State of the Union message that the Persian Gulf was a "vital American interest" and U.S. military forces were significantly enhanced in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. In addition, the United States opened negotiations with Oman, Somalia and Kenya for military basing rights, stepped-up development of the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), and increased the military build-up on Diego Garcia.

2. In May 1980, after several days of national rioting, martial law was declared in South Korea; the government cabinet resigned and Lt. Gen. Chun Doo Hwan assumed control over a military government.

3. The national crisis in Poland which began with work stoppages in July, caused the downfall of Polish leader Edward Gierek, and the formation of a national labor union.

4. Following several months of rising tension, a Turkish military coup occurred in September and martial law was declared throughout that nation.

5. The Iranian-Iraqi War which commenced on 22 September 1980.

The events and circumstances described above, while not hampering Soviet military capabilities, would certainly cause state planners to carefully consider the "correlation of forces" in the Iran-Iraq War as well as the U.S.S.R.'s global responsibilities. One additional concern which might be considered a domestic military constraint has been the poor showing of the Red Army against the Afghan rebels and the dismal performance of the Soviet-equipped and trained Iraqi forces. Soviet planners may be sensitive to the loss of prestige which results from these military setbacks to the U.S.S.R.'s super-power image. The implication of these military variables is not to discount the utility of military deterrence in the Iranian-Iraqi War, or to argue that Moscow's aims will be limited and defensive in the Middle East. Rather, it is suggested that the Soviet planners have added emphasis for assuming a cautious stance in their policy-option deliberations regarding this war.

The final, and quite possibly, most important domestic consideration are the dynamics of the Soviet political system. Recent writings indicate that there is a highly important inter-connection between Soviet domestic and foreign policy and that decision making in the Brezhnev regime reflects the results of consensus building efforts among the political elite.¹⁰⁶ The fact remains that Leonid Brezhnev is in firm control of Soviet politics and that the party elite will carefully consider the present government's performance before the inevitable succession process is completed. It is arguable that the failure of détente,

the unravelling of the SALT process, the turmoil within the Socialist family of nations, and the slowdown in the Soviet economy have made the present leadership extremely sensitive and cautiously conservative in their foreign policy decisions.

We see evidence of this conservatism in several areas. In the recently concluded twenty-sixth Party Congress the entire Soviet Politburo was reinstalled without a single change in the political leadership. According to veteran observers, this is the first time since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 that the CPSU has emerged from a party congress without making any changes to the leadership roster.¹⁰⁷ A second example is the overall restraint with which the Soviets have dealt with the Reagan Administration, despite hardline U.S. declared policy in Central America, Europe and the Middle East. Brezhnev, in an astute political move, has even gone so far as to propose a summit with Reagan to discuss U.S.-Soviet differences. A final conservative illustration is the remarkable patience that the Soviet leadership has demonstrated in the Polish crisis despite the vital position that Poland occupies in the Warsaw Pact in terms of geo-strategic location, military and economic potential, and size of population.¹⁰⁸

The lessons that can be applied to the Iranian-Iraqi War from this brief discussion of domestic constraints are that the present Soviet leadership have many limitations as well as capabilities to weigh prior to deciding on a policy course to follow, and the policy selected will be slowly and deliberately

formed by risk-conscious conservative leaders. This policy will be designed to maximize long-term benefits to the Soviet Union, and will be implemented carefully so as not to foreclose options and reduce Moscow's flexibility. It is also important to re-emphasize that Moscow's primary objective is to protect the existing Soviet empire.

2. The Regional Level

At this level of analysis there are several actors and issues to consider including the nations which border on Iran and Iraq, the Persian Gulf states, the Arab states, the Palestinians and the Israelis. What are the consequences of Soviet actions at this level? What are the costs and benefits of adopting a pro-Iraqi or a pro-Iranian stance? How do these regional players enter into the Soviet policy making structure? Let us begin by looking at the war in terms of its effects on the Middle East.

The Iranian-Iraqi War fractionalized the region into three camps: the pro-Iraqi nations, the pro-Iranian states, and the non-aligned.¹⁰⁹ The states that support Iraq can further be divided into active and passive support categories. As of this writing, the only active supporter of Iraq is Jordan. King Hussein announced very quickly his total support of Iraq in its conflict to protect Arab lands and Arab legitimate rights. Jordan has demonstrated its support by: authorizing Iraqi planes to land at Jordanian airfields in order to protect them from Iranian attack; opening the port

of Aqaba for the delivery of Iraqi supplies; the provision of Jordanian commercial transport to deliver goods overland to Baghdad; placing the Jordanian military forces on a state of alert; and sending medical supplies and personnel to Iraq to help care for wounded combatants. The King has also offered Jordanian military assistance to Saddam Hussain which has not as yet been called into service.¹¹⁰

The passive supporters of Iraq include Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. These states have abstained from official expressions of support for Iraq but are ideologically supportive of Saddam Hussain's Pan-Arab motives in seeking to regain "Arab territories" from Iran.¹¹¹ Also, these states have felt threatened by the Teheran fundamentalists' exhortations to Gulf Shi'ite Muslims to join in the Islamic Revolution. These passive supporters of Iraq have not made any official pronouncements to-date, but unofficial radio and newspaper backing for Iraq has not been disclaimed either.¹¹² At the outset of the war, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Gulf states also acted, in a practical fashion, by declaring a state of alert for their Armed Forces and have fortified aerial defenses.

The declared pro-Iranian states in the Middle East are Syria and Libya. The Syrian support of Iran is officially cited as being in the best interest of the Arab states in the Arab-Israeli conflict in which Iran has declared support for the Arab side. Unofficially, Syria and Iraq have a long-standing

disagreement regarding leadership of Baath Socialism and Presidents Assad and Hussain have an intense dislike for each other on ideological, political and religious grounds. The Syrian support of Iran stops well short of entering into open hostilities with Iraq due to Syrian military involvement in Lebanon and fear of Israel. Libya's backing for revolutionary Iran centers on ideological support for Islamic revival. Libya is virtually isolated in the Arab world and Col. Qaddafi's bolstering of Iran represents his frustration and inability to fulfill a leadership role in Arab affairs.¹¹³

Those states who have remained neutral, but concerned about the outcome of the present war include Egypt, Pakistan, Turkey and Israel. Turkey and Pakistan's concerns are principally economic and security-based. Both nations border on the hostile region and depend upon oil imports from the Persian Gulf to fuel their respective economies. Egypt's President Sadat, while emphasizing that the fighting only benefits the Soviet Union, has exhorted the United States to intervene and overthrow the Khomeini regime.¹¹⁴ Sadat's position no doubt reflects his continued support for the Pahlavi family and not his enthusiasm for Saddam Hussain with whom Sadat is competing for leadership of the Arab world. Israel's interest in the conflict is to evaluate Iraqi military performance for future strategic planning purposes.¹¹⁵ One additional actor who has declared neutrality in this conflict is the Palestine Liberation Organization. PLO leader Yasser Arafat travelled to Baghdad and

Teheran during the first week of the war in an unsuccessful mediation attempt. The PLO, like the Soviet Union, is an ally of both warring states and, unlike Moscow, has virtually nothing to gain from prolonged hostilities.¹¹⁶

The Soviet dilemma in the Middle East is that the Iranian-Iraqi conflict splits Moscow's allies into factions on both sides of the war. Almost any Soviet Gulf policy during this war will alienate some nations and will impede short-term progress towards attainment of regional goals. If the Soviet Union strongly bolsters the Iraqis and provides substantial military aid to Saddam Hussain, it will risk progress made with Soviet allies Syria and Libya as well as destroy any possibility of gaining influence in Iran. Strong support for Iraq would ultimately threaten the remaining Gulf states, Egypt, and Israel who are not pleased with the prospect of Iraqi ascendancy in the Arab world, OPEC, and the Persian Gulf. Weak or inconsistent support for Iraq could discredit the U.S.S.R. as an ally and reduce its potential for long-term gains in the region.

Alternatively, strong support for Iran would cause an alienation of the Arab states, destroy gains made in Iraq, and reduce Soviet influence in this essential region. Weak support for Iran will most likely prove unacceptable to the Iranians, would prolong the conflict indefinitely, and could be viewed by the remaining regional actors as a Soviet attempt to subvert the Persian Gulf. Under these circumstances it is

understandable why the Kremlin would prefer to avoid choosing between countries, wait for a break in the war, and consider the options and possible impacts of Soviet actions on the international system.

3. The Global Level

This is a very important level of analysis for Soviet politicians. It is at this aggregation that decision making involves its greatest risks and potential gains. Among the actors which Moscow views in terms of response to Soviet policy, only one nation in this instance is crucial, the United States. Other actors, such as the Peoples' Republic of China, NATO, the Warsaw Pact nations, and Japan are important for Moscow to incorporate into their strategic policy decisions, but only the U.S. capability in the Persian Gulf could tip the scale far enough to render the evidence gleaned from the other levels of analysis as less important. For it is only the United States which could seriously oppose the Soviet Union militarily at the nuclear level. It is the global correlation of forces tempered by U.S. willingness to intervene in the Middle East which Soviet decision makers must contemplate and balance in their response to the Iranian-Iraqi War.

The Soviet Union did not have to wait long to determine what the United States policy in the Iran-Iraq War would be. From the outset, the Carter Administration announced its neutrality in the conflict and continued its longstanding preoccupation with the hostage crisis in Iran. It was quickly

agreed therefore to exchange letters with the United States to cement the Carter position in a public fashion. Although the emphasis on the agreed position was in regard to military restraint in the war, the American emphasis on the hostage issue and the impending U.S. presidential elections assured that the United States focus would be distracted from the Iran-Iraq crisis. This left the Soviet Union relatively free to implement its own strategy in the Gulf war.¹¹⁷

D. THE BALANCE SHEET

A review of the analysis presented here indicates that in the selection of an ally in the present conflict, there is no clear winner. Based on the Soviet goals of security, the removal of Western influence, and ultimately exerting Soviet control in the Persian Gulf, Iran appears to be of longer-term importance in the region than Iraq. Iran's geo-strategic location, size and characteristics, larger population, and mineral resources would give Iran an overall higher rating in a net assessment of potential power. However, Iraq is a very significant nation in Southwest Asia. It is presently the most powerful Arab state, it has vast mineral wealth, and a growing middle class society. There are also several political intangibles that Moscow factors into their assessment such as the Iraqi position among the Arab states, the leadership potential that Saddam Hussain has exhibited, and the warming relations between Iraq and the West. Also, President

Hussain is scheduled to replace Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro in 1982 as the unofficial spokesman of the Non-Aligned nations for the next three years. The balance sheet is inconclusive and Moscow's policy in the Iran-Iraq struggle reflects the dilemma of choosing sides.

E. SOVIET STRATEGY AND THE WAR

Moscow's solution to the challenges presented by the Iran-Iraq War has been to try, in its own way, to be even-handed on all issues which surround the conflict and to frequently call for an end to military hostilities. From a Kremlin perspective, this policy provides the widest latitude for exploiting opportunities without becoming mired in the process of choosing sides. The policy of neutrality also reflects Moscow's lack of control over the belligerents and other regional actors. Much as it had during the initial phases of the Ethiopia-Somali conflict in 1977, Moscow has sought to demonstrate friendship toward both sides. The U.S.S.R. news media initially covered the events of the war in a uniform fashion by first presenting daily Baghdad's military dispatches and reposts on the fighting, and then similar dispatches from Teheran.¹¹⁸ On occasion, these two views were supplemented by dispatches from third countries. The reactions selected for use in the Soviet press, usually included a call for an end to hostilities, as well as underscoring the dangers created for all parties in the region. Moscow avoided taking sides as to responsibility for the

outbreak of the war by generally stating that the conflict was the result of long-standing territorial differences and was a purely regional dispute.

The strongest theme to emerge from the initial stages of the war reporting by the U.S.S.R. was that the forces of imperialism were using the conflict as an excuse to bolster their military presence in the Persian Gulf.¹¹⁹ Moscow's leaders sought to make the United States Gulf activities the central issue in the Iran-Iraq conflict. President Brezhnev, while speaking at a dinner in honor of the visiting Indian President Reddy on 30 September, declared that

"It can hardly be thought that it was simply a tragic misunderstanding . . . No, some people are obviously trying to turn this conflict to their profit. You will ask, who? They are the people who are unhappy with the cohesion of the anti-imperialist forces in the Near and Middle East. They are those who want to establish their control over Near and Middle East oil who again dream of turning Iran into a military base and a gendarme post of imperialism."¹²⁰

Other Soviet reporters were not so diplomatic in their denouncements. Frequent commentaries in major Soviet newspapers charged that the U.S. was benefitting from the war, was preparing to intervene militarily, and would shortly attempt to occupy the oil fields of the Gulf. One regular object of Soviet assault has been the U.S. and Allied naval forces in the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf. The Soviets also lashed out at the four AWACS aircraft deployed to Saudi Arabia, charging that U.S. presence was artificially fanning the flames in the Gulf to further American interests. Moscow's pronouncements against "gunboat diplomacy" have continued throughout

the conflict and were particularly vehement during joint U.S.-Egyptian exercises conducted in November 1980.

Soviet propagandists have worked overtime to exploit the instability in the Gulf. Other actors have been assailed, especially President Anwar Sadat of Egypt, and the Israelis. The NATO countries have also been chided for their participation in the Allied naval force build-up in the Arabian Sea. Moscow has also manipulated the war for its own diplomatic gains most notably in Syria with whom the Soviet Union signed a twenty year Friendship and Cooperation Treaty on 8 October 1980. In addition to arming Iraq, the Soviet Union has become a major supplier of weapons to Syria, Libya and South Yemen (PDRY), and has been courting Jordan's King Hussein with offers of arms and other military support.

Evidence suggests that the Soviet style of neutrality includes actively supplying both belligerents with limited quantities of arms, while offering larger economic and political incentives to Iran.¹²¹ Although the Soviet Union apparently had no role in starting the hostilities they have been quick to exploit both sides for short and long-term potential gains. One analyst's viewpoint is that the Soviets are not enchanted with the war, nonetheless prolonged, controlled conflict offers many benefits to the Kremlin.¹²² By providing limited quantities of arms to Iraq and Iran, the Soviets may be creating a situation where they are able to step-in and act as mediators to end the war. Certainly a Pax Sovietica

that would halt the hostilities would enhance Moscow's prestige in the area and may help to secure long-term allies in much the same fashion that India tilted towards the U.S.S.R. following the Soviet-mediated peace agreement in the 1966 border war between Pakistan and India. Soviet manipulation of the arms flow into either camp also offers the prospect of influencing the direction of the Iranian Revolution, and could ultimately determine the political fate of Iraq's Saddam Hussain. By affecting the military capability of Iran and Iraq, the U.S.S.R. helps to make the war more stable from their perspective and reduces the necessity for an early decision in Soviet policy in the Gulf. Russian influence also enables the Kremlin to maintain a closer tactical picture of the fighting and to measure and exploit the respective shortcomings of the warring parties.

It has been demonstrated in several Third World struggles that the Soviet Union's traditional diplomatic approach is to attempt to win influence on both sides of the conflict. This was the case in the 1965 and 1971 India-Pakistan border wars, the 1977 Somali-Ethiopian crisis, the 1978-79 Iranian Revolution, as well as in the current Iranian-Iraqi War. The Soviets would also prefer a position of control in the region to less substantive influence and it is certain that the Kremlin would favor long-term presence to shortened gains. The importance of the region to the U.S.S.R. outweighs the value of either Iran or Iraq as individual allies. This was underscored by

President Brezhnev's efforts in December 1980 to seek a long-term security program for the Persian Gulf. The Soviet leaders' five-point program sought commitments from the United States, other Western powers, China, Japan, and all other interested states to:

1. not establish foreign military bases in the Persian Gulf; not deploy nuclear weapons in the region;
2. not employ or threaten force against the nations of the region and not to interfere in their internal affairs;
3. respect the non-aligned status chosen by governments of the region; not to draw them into military alliances;
4. respect the sovereign rights of states in the region to their natural resources;
5. not raise any obstacles or threats to normal commerce or to the use of the sea lanes linking the Gulf states with other countries of the world.¹²³

Although these proposals seem conciliatory and constructive on the surface, recalling the Soviet aims for removing all Western influence in the Persian Gulf leads to an alternative viewpoint. Brezhnev's program would not affect Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, PDRY, or Ethiopia, while attempting to exclude U.S. forces from being stationed in Saudi Arabia, Oman or Somalia. The call against the use of force would not prevent the Soviet Union from providing the same sort of fraternal assistance that is currently operating in Afghanistan as mandated by the bilateral treaties in-force with PDRY, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and now, Syria. The commitment to respect the non-aligned status of selected governments could be used to prevent regional mutual defense and security pacts

from being established or supported by the United States or its Western Allies. Economically and politically, the proposal guaranteeing the sovereignty of natural resources is an effective propaganda statement which is unlikely to affect the Soviet Union, but in the event of another oil embargo would present serious diplomatic restraints to the West. The final item on the Brezhnev program is the only one which would significantly benefit the industrialized nations. The U.S.S.R. has, at present, little concern with the sea lanes in the Gulf region and nearly all their economic requirements could be met by land route and pipeline systems. Perhaps this statement is designed to "heighten the interest in the West" and stimulate debate on the Brezhnev-proposed Gulf peace program.¹²⁴

Ultimately, the Brezhnev five-point program is a deliberate propaganda move designed to enhance the Soviet Union's role in the Middle East. The overall effect of a Western acceptance of these proposals would be to reduce Western influence in the region and further exacerbate the balance-of-forces problem which already exists in this area.¹²⁵ The Soviet Union's massive land-based forces could prove to be the deciding factor that influences future regional political, ideological and economic policies. Additionally, the view of the sectional actors themselves might be that the superpowers, by enacting these proposals, were preparing to sub-divide the area into

spheres of influence in a return to colonial imperialism. The potential gains for the Soviet Union in this new role of peacemaker would have long-term negative balance of power effects for the United States and the West. It is to the realm of strategic implications for the United States and Naval policy to which we next turn.

V. IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE NAVY

"Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."¹²⁶

President Carter
January 1980

A. STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

Two themes are dominant in this announcement of the "Carter Doctrine:" the Persian Gulf region is an area of vital American interest, and the United States will use military force to defend the Gulf. The President's pronouncement of concern and willingness to respond was not a new course for American policy, but confirmation of a long-standing strategy for this area. The policy determination that "the security of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East is vital to the security of the United States" was first made in 1946 at the time of the Azerbaijan crisis by President Truman.¹²⁷ The objective of U.S. policy since that time has been to contain the Soviet threat. The Southwest Asian region has been the focus of several attempts to build security links to prevent the intrusion of the U.S.S.R. into the area. The Truman Doctrine of 1947, the formation of CENTO, the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957, and the Nixon Doctrine of 1969, all stressed collective

security measures in attempting to exclude the Soviets from the region and to protect Western interests. The U.S. policy of containment failed. Russian influence and presence in the Middle East has survived Western efforts and regional policy setbacks and the U.S.S.R.'s influence continues to be important in Gulf politics.

The Soviet threat is a prominent theme in current U.S. national security literature. This is especially true of the writings that deal with Iran and the Persian Gulf. The twin threats of Communism and the Red Army are favorite items for discussion in this post-Afghanistan environment. What is the nature of this threat? How does it affect American national security objectives in Southwest Asia? What are the implications and situations that are likely to evolve based on the current assessment? Finally, what is the U.S. Navy's role, its capabilities, and limitations in responding to a Soviet threat in the Gulf? These topics will be considered in the framework of Moscow's security, economic and ideological objectives for Iran and the region as outlined in preceding chapters.

B. U.S. OBJECTIVES

Successive American administrations have defined U.S. goals in Southwest Asia in three basic areas. First, the freedom of access to the region's resources upon which the West is seriously dependent. (See Table 5-1) Second, the containment of Soviet influence and third, the preservation

TABLE 5-1

Western Industrialized Nations
and Persian Gulf Oil

1979	<u>United States</u>	<u>European Community</u>	<u>Japan</u>
a. Oil as percent of total energy consumed	47	55	71
b. Percent of oil imported	44	87	100
c. Percent of oil imported from Persian Gulf	30	57	73
d. Persian Gulf oil as percent of total energy consumed	8	28	51

Source: John M. Collins, U.S.-Soviet Military Balance: Book IV. Far East, Middle East Assessments, Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, July 1980, p. 59.

of the state of Israel. Since the 1973 rise of OPEC influence and the quadrupling of world petroleum prices, a fourth goal has gained importance, namely, the promotion of friendly and cooperative relations with the Arab States of the Middle East. Closely associated to all of these goals is the prevention of a major regional war, especially a fifth Arab-Israeli conflict.¹²⁸

The Persian Gulf oil fields are extremely important to the United States. This is not because of direct U.S. dependence on the oil resources of the region without which the American economy would stumble, but continue to function. Rather, it is the possible long-term implications of Soviet control over these resources which threatens the United States. Soviet command over this essential area would enable the U.S.S.R. to directly influence the oil supplies upon which Western Europe and Japan are so vitally dependent. This could lead to the weakening of the North Atlantic Alliance and would severely constrain the independence of the Western nations and Japan. The dissolution of NATO and a decline in U.S. security, economic vitality, and world power through influence, could certainly follow in this scenario. This is an ultimate objective of Soviet policy and for this reason, the United States should do everything that it can to avoid Soviet dominance in the Persian Gulf by responding firmly to the Soviet threat.

C. THREAT ANALYSIS

The Soviet Union's ability to threaten Iran and U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf is significant. The military capability of the U.S.S.R. is enormous and continues to grow at a rapid rate.¹²⁹ The Western debate on Soviet capabilities differs principally as to the intent of Soviet leaders for the applications of this power, not on the magnitude of Soviet military forces. It is readily acknowledged that the Soviet Union has achieved strategic parity in nuclear forces, that they have outspent the United States in defense appropriations by more than \$100 billion in the past decade, and that the U.S.S.R. leads the United States in virtually every major category in conventional and strategic military comparisons.¹³⁰ In the vicinity of Iran, Soviet power is manifested in part by the twenty-three combat divisions and three hundred strike aircraft in the Central Asian Military Districts, the estimated 80,000 combat troops in Afghanistan, and the twenty-one naval vessels which comprise the current Soviet Indian Ocean Squadron on patrol in adjacent seas. In addition, the U.S.S.R.'s ability to project power includes seven operational airborne divisions and the demonstrated airlift capacity to deliver these forces and their supporting equipment to the region in a rapid fashion. In opposition, the United States has thirty-two combat and support vessels including two carrier battle groups. The nearest U.S. military base is on the island of

Diego Garcia, located in the center of the Indian Ocean some 2500 nautical miles from the Persian Gulf. The imbalance of forces in-being could hardly be more distinct.¹³¹

It is clear that the Soviet conventional military capability in Iran and the Gulf is superior to that of the United States. The shortfalls have been identified and the U.S. defense establishment is working hard to reduce the imbalances and upgrade American military capabilities by a variety of measures. The question that remains is what practical value does outside military force contain for the Gulf region? Although the Soviet capabilities are significant, do they represent a viable instrument which can be successfully employed in this theater? It is the conclusion of this study that Soviet military abilities are useful in that they can, and do, influence some local governmental decisions, but that the direct employment of Soviet military power in Iran is not a likely policy option due to the risks and uncertainties involved in such an intervention.

Several of the problems that face the Soviet planners in Iran, especially in the context of the ongoing Iran-Iraq War were outlined in Chapter IV such as the domestic constraints on Soviet power, the regional considerations and the global political and military framework. In specific military terms, the obstacles of intervening in Iran place severe limitations on any Russian invasion attempt. Based on the Soviet's Afghan experience, the U.S.S.R. would most likely have to commit

upwards of 300,000 men, or three times as many forces to occupy Iran in an attempt to pacify the country and control the Iranian oil fields. The supply lines' requirements leading back to the Soviet Union would be extensive. The Kremlin would have to import countless technicians and workers into Iran, as well as make a large capital outlay to restore and then maintain Iranian oil production which would further degrade Moscow's energy development and domestic economic plans. These troops and technicians could be absent for a long-term period which would significantly detract from Soviet capabilities in other theaters of operation. Although they share a common border, it is still five hundred miles to the Iranian oil fields of Khuzestan via a land route from Central Asia, and roughly seven hundred air miles from Afghanistan. Any Soviet operations attempted from seaward approaches to Iran would have to contend with U.S. carrier-based air power.

There are other important military factors that would impede Soviet progress in Iran: the Iranian road system is rudimentary; the railroad networks are nominal; water is scarce in many areas of Iran; and food supplies are scanty.¹³² The Persian Gulf itself is also at or beyond the extreme ranges of most Soviet fighter and attack aircraft based on U.S.S.R. territory. Russian airborne operations, parachute assaults, and linkup operations utilized to seize and hold advance positions would all lack air cover until Moscow could

neutralize, occupy, or control southern Iranian air bases. Soviet naval units would benefit from some land-based long range aviation, but they could not rely on complete land-based air cover or logistics support operations.

At sea, Soviet maritime units would have to contend with Allied forces including American, French, and occasional British and Australian units, as well as the tremendous volume of commercial shipping in the region.¹³³ Soviet havens, anchorages and resupply areas such as Socotra Island off the African Horn, the regions near the Comoro Islands between Tanzania and the Malagasy Republic, and the Cargados Carajos Shoals near Mauritius as well as the Chagos Archipelago near Diego Garcia would all be open to attack.¹³⁴ Soviet naval forces including surface and submarine units, could infiltrate into threatening positions in peacetime and possibly exert a substantial toll on Allied shipping, but would find no safe support facilities anywhere in the Indian Ocean region. Their principal problem would be how to deliver attacks and retire homewards through the gauntlet of Allied naval forces at choke points around the basin.¹³⁵

There are alternative military options in the Gulf to limited or general conventional combat. The Soviets could conduct offensive mine warfare to close the Straits of Hormuz and attempt to impose a political settlement in the region. Alternatively, the U.S.S.R. could cripple selected petroleum port facilities such as refineries, pumping stations, storage

facilities, and piers by surgical air strikes or covert operations. Moscow could attempt these operations with Soviet forces or enlist the assistance of proxy forces from Cuba, Ethiopia, the PDRY or the PLO. In any event, the Kremlin would risk facing determined U.S., Allied and Middle Eastern opposition which could escalate very quickly from the conventional or limited environment envisioned to tactical nuclear weapons and possibly strategic exchanges in a spasm war.

There are many other escalation options that the Soviet Union could consider including diversions in other theaters and interdiction. For example, Soviet leaders could divert United States public opinion and Armed Forces concentrations by increasing tensions in Berlin, Korea, Southeast Asia or the Caribbean. This escalation of tension in other regions would stretch already thinned American and Allied forces to an unacceptable limit and significantly increase re-supply and logistics difficulties for the Persian Gulf. The U.S.S.R. might also choose to conduct anti-shipping campaigns in the Far East, the Mediterranean, the North Sea or Indian Ocean regions along Western Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC's). Utilizing its large long range aviation forces and pre-positioned submarine force, Moscow could quickly slow Western re-supply efforts and wreak havoc with European and Japanese economic performance. The Soviets might be able to thus separate and isolate U.S. and Allied forces and prevent a concentrated defensive effort from being mounted in

the Persian Gulf while conserving Soviet strength in the region. To exercise any of these alternatives the Soviet Union would risk the outbreak of global hostilities that would make the Persian Gulf benefits shrink in importance.

The bottom line in this discussion of Soviet military abilities is that the U.S.S.R. possesses the requisite forces to intervene in Iran if:

1. the correlation of forces in the region continues to improve in the Kremlin's favor;
2. the Iranian state should collapse into civil war and Soviet security is perceived to be severely threatened;
3. the opportunity to provide limited assistance in response to a call by a legitimate faction inside Iran were to present itself;
4. the United States were to introduce ground forces into the region.

There are numerous possibilities and scenarios that one could devise which might prompt a Soviet military response in Iran. To that end, some authors have postulated that one motivational factor for the Soviet decision to introduce troops into neighboring Afghanistan was to improve Soviet strategic position in relation to the Persian Gulf.¹³⁶ Certainly one of the outcomes of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan has been to bring Soviet air and land forces into a favorable position to influence not only Iranian developments but also to within 350 miles of the vital Straits of Hormuz which increases the sensitivity of Pakistan and India as well as the Western nations to the presence of Soviet power in Southwest Asia.

However, the risks surrounding Soviet initiation of hostilities in the region would be extraordinary given the United States announcements and claims to the vital nature of the region. The combination of American declaratory policy, underscored by the Reagan landslide election victory, and the Soviet military uncertainty in achieving regional goals at an acceptable cost leads the conservative Brezhnev regime to continue a policy of caution in Iran and the Iran-Iraq War.

This is not to imply that the Soviet Union will not exploit opportunities which arise in the region. This is especially true when the risk of U.S. involvement is diminished. It is this author's belief that one of the important factors in the U.S.S.R.'s decision to intervene in Afghanistan was the U.S. preoccupation with the hostage crisis in neighboring Iran. Soviet decision makers most likely decided that the Carter Administration's indecisive response to the Iranian seizure of U.S. embassy personnel would be repeated towards the Soviet involvement in an area peripheral to American vital interests. Although the U.S. response was more vigorous than was perhaps anticipated, the Soviet Union did not let the opportunity pass. One may reasonably assume, based on the significance of the region and the difficulty for U.S. planners in making a credible move into Southwest Asia, that the U.S.S.R. would be tempted to consider bold action in the event of future opportunities which might arise in Iran.

The United States' problems in exercising a credible military option in this area are also grave. From a spatial perspective alone, the Persian Gulf is more remote from the U.S. than any other available source of petroleum imports. Airline distances to the region are greater than 6,000 nautical miles from the American eastern seaboard. Sea lanes via the Suez Canal, or Cape Route are much longer. The principal problem facing United States strategic planners is that of action or reaction time. The continuing debate on the viability of an American Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) to meet Persian Gulf situations requiring military forces is sufficiently described elsewhere.¹³⁷ The paucity of U.S. airlift and sealift assets continues to limit the useful applications of such a force in the area. At the present time it is acknowledged that the RDF's most useful function in a Gulf action involving Soviet military forces would be to demonstrate U.S. resolve and act as a "tripwire" which would assure a larger commitment of American power in the region.¹³⁸

Under the prevailing conditions, which dictate caution in the application of military force by the U.S.S.R. and the United States, one should consider what could bring superpower military units into the region. The principal threat that this author sees to U.S. national security objectives is the instability and volatile nature of the region itself. The two issues which have historically

provided multiple opportunities for Soviet political gains in the region are the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian issue. There are many other regional problems which produce opportunities for Russian influence and persuasion without resorting to military forces. Some of these issues include the presence of restive ethnic minorities, religious divisions, unsettled boundary disputes, modernization, government and leadership legitimacy, primordialism, and most recently, the revolutionary developments in Iran. The ability of the U.S.S.R. to foment unrest and destabilize local regimes presently favorable to the West is the most "dangerous security issue in the region."¹³⁹ This threat does not equate to the mass communitization of Southwest Asia, or the direct Soviet occupation of the Persian Gulf oil fields and the resultant economic strangulation of the West. Rather, the threat that faces the United States and its Allies is the prospect of the failure of local deterrence and the lack of escalation-control devices in a regional conflict which could spill over into a superpower confrontation. The lack of resolution of "internal" problems in the region is viewed by area specialists and regional actors alike as the primary challenge to security and prosperity in the Gulf.¹⁴⁰ As in the past, the major impediment to stability is the unresolved Arab-Israeli issue. The threat of war has been most recently demonstrated by the events of May 1981 surrounding the Syrian introduction of Soviet surface-to-air

missiles into Lebanon which, at the time of this writing, remains as a potentially serious and unresolved issue in the Middle East.

Regional issues and rivalries can be viewed as the most likely catalysts leading to a U.S.-U.S.S.R. military confrontation in Iran and the Persian Gulf. If one accepts the premise that the problems which face the United States in Southwest Asia are basically political, then there are a number of options which lend themselves to analysis and the formulation of a coherent regional policy. However, given the number of regional issues that could lead to military actions by the superpowers, the primary task for U.S. national strategic planners is to determine how to act in a crisis situation to contain a Middle Eastern problem and reduce the threat of escalation, while seeking to achieve U.S. national objectives without risking a military collision with locally superior Soviet forces. In the event of hostilities, the United States Navy's role in Southwest Asia could be decisive to the success or failure of such a plan.

D. THE NAVAL RESPONSE

The difficulty of securing Western insterests in Iran and the Persian Gulf requires, in one analyst's words, "a (Western) response that is multi-leveled, comprising military, political, and economic instruments that are coordinated with allies, regional and extra-regional, that are buttressed by policies in adjacent regions."¹⁴¹ While the United States continues

to seek regional political and economic solutions that are lasting, it is prudent to consider the various facets of a military response in the Persian Gulf. It is the military question which this assessment will focus upon. It is the author's contention that, pending the formation of a truly operational RDF and the improvement of U.S. airlift and sealift capabilities, the Navy represents the only credible United States military instrument in the Persian Gulf.

Throughout the 1978-79 Iranian Revolution, and especially during the fourteen month hostage crisis, the U.S. Navy was the only visible expression of Western power in the Persian Gulf region. The carrier battle groups and Marine amphibious forces on station in the Arabian Sea played a fundamental role in maintaining a regional superpower balance of forces. The proximity of these forces most likely weighed heavily in the Soviet decision to adopt a cautiously neutral policy towards Iran and the Iran-Iraq War. The Naval forces were cited repeatedly in Soviet press and radio propaganda reports as the ultimate threat to regional stability. The potential usefulness of these units was demonstrated in the abortive U.S. hostage rescue attempt in April 1980 which, although unsuccessful in returning the hostages, served to remind the Iranians that their actions were not taking place in a power vacuum. One might argue that Iran's subsequent behavior in failing to execute the threatened mining of the Straits of Hormuz in response to the Iraqi invasion, and indeed the

eventual safe return of the American hostages in January 1981 were directly attributable to the presence of U.S. seaborne forces. The continued deployment of Naval units is a visible reminder of the military options that exist for the West to employ in Iran and the Gulf if required.

The ground and air options are less tangible responses because there are no U.S. client states in the immediate vicinity who have offered basing rights for U.S. troops and equipment. It is politically doubtful that any regional state, other than Israel, could make such an offer. If permanent basing rights were implemented it could well increase the likelihood of Soviet intervention in the region. Even if a forward base position were to be identified, it could take several budget years to fund, procure, and construct a suitable facility to support U.S. ground and air forces. Finally, fixed base sites are vulnerable to pre-emptive attack which would return the strategic balance in Southwest Asia to its present lamentable condition.

The Rapid Deployment Force will significantly enhance U.S. crisis response capabilities. The political consensus and budget actions already implemented in support of this defense plan are impressive. However, the final product, when tested, equipped, and trained for combat operations, will not appear on the international scene until 1985 or later. It will take at least this much time to complete the necessary augmentation of strategic airlift and sealift with such options as to build

CX intercontinental aircraft, Roll-on Roll-off support ships, and the command infrastructure to support such a force.¹⁴² The RDF is not a panacea, just as Diego Garcia cannot simultaneously be "all things to all services" in the Indian Ocean. Once the RDF is committed to a theater, for example into El Salvador, Thailand, or the Persian Gulf, the United States is back to its present reliance on naval forces to demonstrate presence and project power in a crisis situation.

The subject of how to protect the West's oil supplies which emanate from the Persian Gulf has received a great deal of emphasis in recent years. The technical problems of securing oil fields and industrial complexes ashore have been debated by several studies. The conclusion reached by a 1980 Congressional Research Service report which focuses on defense of the oil fields is that "success thus would depend predominately on two prerequisites: slight damage to key installations and Soviet abstinence from armed intervention."¹⁴³ Since neither of these conditions could be assured, the use of military force to seize, operate, and protect oil fields in the Persian Gulf is a dubious prospect with high risks and potential far-reaching costs.

The same restrictions apply to a Soviet attacker. If, as the CIA suggests, the oil fields will one day be of immense value to the Soviet economy as well as to U.S.S.R. client states, then the risks of military operations must also be disconcerting to Soviet leaders.¹⁴⁴ The Kremlin is faced with

the same dilemma that exists in a NATO/Warsaw Pact war environment where the very object they seek, namely the European economic base, could well be destroyed in an attempt to realize the military attainment of the goal. The most desirable solution for the Soviet Union would be to gain control of Gulf oil without exercising the military option. This may not be possible, however, given the limitations outlined in this thesis, such as the U.S.S.R.'s inability to compete in the petroleum marketplace due to declining Soviet productivity and a lack of hard currency to conduct foreign trade. The U.S.S.R. may also be inhibited ideologically by the lack of appeal of Communism in the Islamic Middle East. Politically, the Soviet measures exercised to-date have produced only limited gains which are not irreversible.

The military option that could preserve the oil fields intact while presenting the least risk to the Soviet homeland is a limited war at sea. Such a conflict, if successfully prosecuted, could reduce Western influence and promote Soviet areawide dominance without damaging the Gulf's fragile petroleum system. The war at sea scenario could also provide a natural escalation firebreak without jeopardizing Soviet ground and air forces superiority in this region. Such a conflict could be quick, decisive, and relatively low-cost. A Russian preemptive attack against Diego Garcia and the carrier battle groups in the Arabian Sea could be over in minutes and the U.S. would be faced with the choice of:

1. a negotiated settlement;
2. responding in kind in a limited fashion;
3. escalation of the conflict.

A Soviet attack of this nature, coupled with intense global propaganda, and the (pro-offered) olive branch in the form of negotiations, would place enormous pressure on American decision makers. Given the present strategic nuclear and conventional imbalances, it would be difficult to convince American, Allied or Third World audiences of the necessity to escalate a limited conflict. A U.S. credible response by naval units would take several days or weeks to mount in the Indian Ocean in light of the transit distances from U.S. bases and the shortage of units in the region. It would be very difficult to disregard the negotiations "opportunity" under these conditions. In this situation, the outcome would depend heavily on the size and ability of the U.S. naval forces deployed to the region.¹⁴⁵

The United States is well served by its maritime power in the Indian Ocean. Navy and Marine Corps units act as a strong deterrent to Soviet aggression. They also function as conspicuous and persistent reminders of U.S. interests and presence in the region. Maritime power is an extremely flexible diplomatic tool which can provide visibility in critical situations and remain unobtrusively over-the-horizon when required. Naval presence offers freedom of action to the U.S. Government which includes speed in intervention as well as open lines of retreat.

Naval units do not require permanent bases and large support elements to remain on station for extended periods. These are some of the reasons which suggest why the Navy is best suited and has been most often used in remote areas during periods of unrest.

From these observations it follows that in devising a strategy for the future in Southwest Asia, United States national security interests requires that we maintain a substantial naval capability and presence in the Indian Ocean. To accomplish this, the current Administration should invest now by beginning to build a fifth numbered U.S. Fleet as well as a Rapid Deployment Force. In the interim, there are a number of innovative programs and recommendations that have been presented by Navy Department officials, scholars, journalists, and laymen to increase the capabilities of present forces. These suggestions include:

1. a restructuring of Navy deployment patterns to reduce U.S. force levels in the Mediterranean and Caribbean Seas to augment the Indian Ocean Fleet;
2. expansion of U.S. Coast Guard responsibilities to include the Caribbean region presently patrolled by the Navy;
3. the inclusion of Allied naval units from France, Britain, Australia, and Japan, for example, into a formal Indian Ocean Maritime Force;
4. the restoration of the U.S. Navy's afloat shipyards and supply depot system that accompanied the Pacific Fleet in the islands-hopping campaign of World War II;
5. a continuing search for overseas bases, homeports, docks and repair facilities in the thirty-six littoral nations;

6. a reactivation and modernization of retired U.S. naval units such as USS Iowa (BB-61), USS New Jersey (BB-62), and the carrier USS Oriskany (CVA-34).¹⁴⁶

There are also numerous proposals that deal with technology and increasing the offensive capabilities of the Navy. Programs which this author recommends for accelerated development and production include:

1. CG-47 and Aegis Combat Systems for improved fleet air defense;
2. VTOL/VSTOL attack aircraft to diversify fleet air capabilities and augment carrier aircraft operations;
3. Tomahawk cruise missile system production in both land and sea, long-range attack versions for installation in submarines and surface combatants for offensive power projection.¹⁴⁷

In sum, the naval agenda is only a portion of the general re-armament program that the United States needs to undertake in support of national objectives in the Persian Gulf. To operationalize these concepts and insure continued access to critical resources it will be necessary to focus American production capacity, manpower, and national will on the Soviet threat. Accordingly, we should adopt a program of strategic mobilization to demonstrate American resolve and a willingness to compete with the U.S.S.R. on a global scale.¹⁴⁸ The very act of adopting such a program and funding naval and other military improvements would be a visible expression of U.S. intentions to our Allies, the Third World, and the Communist Bloc. Implementation of such a program with long-term goals and focused national energy will demonstrate a U.S. return

to global and free-world leadership. The Soviet Union, as described by one author, "is already mobilized and has been proceeding independently of any policy pursued by the U.S. toward the U.S.S.R. for at least twenty years: through periods of Cold War, in hot war in Vietnam, and détente."¹⁴⁹ The Soviets have demonstrated indifference to all these U.S. policy changes. It is time to change this pattern and for the United States to establish and maintain a consistent freeworld leadership posture. We should not be waiting with resignation for a more dramatic move, such as the Soviet invasion of Iran, to adopt a strategy of action.

APPENDIX A

The Soviet Decision Makers Balance Sheet:

Iran and Iraq

A Country Comparison

I. <u>Geography:</u>	<u>Iran</u>	<u>Iraq</u>
Area (sq. miles)	636,000	167,881
Agricultural land	89,040	30,218
Forest coverage	69,960	6,715
Desert	324,360	114,159
Migratory graze land	50,880	16,788
Coastline (miles)	1,976	36
II. <u>Population</u>		
Total	37,582,000	12,900,000
Avg. annual growth rate %	3.0	3.4
Religion: Shia Moslem	34,951,000	5,805,000
Sunni Moslem	1,879,100	2,902,500
Literacy rate (%)	37.0	30.0
Communist party active members (est.)	15,000	2,000
Teachers per 1000 people (1978)	8.4	9.1
Physicians per 1000 people (1978)	.4	.4
III. <u>Economic</u>		
GNP (1978; \$U.S. billion)	69.3	21.9
Imports (1978)	17.7	6.4
Exports (1978)	21.7	11.8
Central Govt. Expenditures (1980)	31.0	15.8
GNP per capita (\$U.S.; 1978)	1,898	1,757
IV. <u>Oil Industry</u>		
Rank among world producers (1979)	4	5
Demonstrated production capacity (MBD) (1977)	6.2	3.0
Proven reserves (billions of barrels) (1977)	60	36
Natural gas production (MCFD) (1977)	4,520	flared
Proven reserves (Trillion CF) (1977)	377	35
Oil Refineries (1977)	7	8
Refinery capacity (barrels/day) (1977)	800,000	186,000

V. National Security

Total Armed Forces	400,000	212,000
Army - Regular	280,000	180,000
Army - Reserves	300,000	250,000
Navy	20,000	4,000
Air Force	100,000	28,000
Para-Military Forces	70,000	79,800
Manpower Fit for Mil. Svc.	4,789,000	1,515,000
A.F. per 1000 people	9.6	11.2
Budget (1978; \$U.S. billions)	7.96	1.66
Mil. Expenditures 1978-1979 (\$U.S. billion)	64.8	16.8
Mil. Exp/GNP (%) (1978)	14.2	9.1
Mil. Exp/Capita (1978)	270	159

VI. Miscellaneous

Major Sea Ports	7	3
Railways (Miles)	2,802	1,057
Paved Roads (Miles)	5,112	12,919
Civil Major Aircraft	62	25
Airfields: Total Useable	161	60
Permanent Surfaced Runways	68	26
over 8000 Feet	17	36
Telecommunications: Telephones	805,600	320,000

Source: Based on Information from Iraq: A Country Study, DA PAM 550-31, Washington D.C., 1979; Iran: A Country Study, DA PAM 550-68, Washington D.C., 1978; World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1969-1978, U.S. ACDA Pub. 108, Washington D.C., 1980; The Military Balance 1980-81, IISS, London, 1980; Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook, George R. Copley, ed., London, 1980.

APPENDIX B

Military Order of Battle

<u>Army:</u>	<u>Iran</u>	<u>Iraq</u>
Manpower: Regular	280,000	180,000
Reserve	300,000	250,000
Armored Divisions	3	4
Infantry Divisions	4	4
Mechanized Divisions	0	2
Indep. Infantry Brigades	2	1
Air Borne Brigade	1	0
Indep. Armored Brigade	0	1
Special Forces Brigade	1	1
Tanks:	1870	1950
APC's:	1975	1990
Artillery: (75mm)	1985	800
SSM	0	38
AA Guns	1900	1200
Army Aviation:		none
Fixed Wing	81	
Attack Helicopters	200	
Transport Helicopters	390	
<u>Navy:</u>		
Manpower	20,000	4,000
Destroyers	3	0
Frigates	4	0
Submarines	3	0
Corvettes	4	3
Light Forces	58	52
Minesweepers	5	5
Amphibious	4	4
Service	3	0
Repair	1	0
Yard Craft	8	2
Naval Aviation:		none
Maritime Recce	6	
Assault Helo	6	
ASW Helo	20	
MCM Helo	6	
FW Transport	11	
Naval Bases	7	1

Air Forces:

Manpower:	Regular	100,000	28,000
	Reserve	15,000	18,000
Bombers		0	31
Strike/Fighter		354	226
Interceptors		77	115
Transport		79	54
Tanker		22	0
Recce		14	0
Helo		84	276

Source: The Military Balance 1980-81, IISS, London, 1980;
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136 See especially Jiri Valenta, "From Prague to Kabul: The Soviet Style of Invasion," International Security 5 (Fall 1980), Valenta, "The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan," also Edward N. Luttwak, "After Afghanistan, What?" Commentary 69 (April 1980).

137 For an analysis of the problems facing a U.S. military response see John L. Moore, ed., U.S. Defense Policy: Weapons, Strategy and Commitments, 2nd edition (Washington D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1980), Benjamin F. Schemmer, "Strategic Initiatives to Bridge a Budget Chasm Too Big For Dollars Alone to Cure," Armed Forces Journal International 4 (March 1981), Collins, U.S.-Soviet Military Balance: Far East, Middle East Assessments, and Maxwell Orme Johnson, "U.S. Strategic Options in the Persian Gulf," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings 107 (February 1981).

138 Harold Brown, DOD Annual Report Fiscal Year 1981, pp. 115-117.

139 Interview with Dr. Adeed I. Dawisha, Assistant Director of Studies, Royal Institute of International Affairs, at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, 1 May 1981.

140 For a discussion of these issues see Steven L. Spiegel, "Does the United States Have Options in the Middle East?" Orbis 24 (Summer 1980), Shahram Chubin, "U.S. Security Interests in the Persian Gulf in the 1980's," Daedalus 3 (Fall 1980), also Eilts, "Security Considerations in the Persian Gulf."

141 Chubin, "U.S. Security Interests in the Persian Gulf in the 1980's," p. 55.

142 See Moore, U.S. Defense Policy: Weapons, Strategy and Commitments, pp. 66-67, also Laurie Parker, "JCS Plan Rejected, RDF Will be Unified Command," Navy Times, 11 May 1981, p. 3.

143 Collins, U.S.-Soviet Military Balance, Far East and Middle East Assessments, p. 107.

144 The Central Intelligence Agency recently revised their forecast of declining Soviet oil production in the mid-1980's and now say that the U.S.S.R. will not need imported oil to meet its energy needs in the coming decade. See "CIA Revises its Estimate of Soviet Oil," San Jose Mercury, 26 May 1981, Section E, p. 4.

145 For one knowledgeable perspective on the possible outcome of such a conflict with the Soviets see Andrew C. A. Jampoler, "America's Vital Interests," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings 107 (January 1981), pp. 29-34.

146 Many of these points are emphasized in Frank Uhlig, Jr., ed., Naval Review 1981 (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1981).

147 Program status and detailed explanations are available in Brown, DOD Annual Report FY 1981, Chapter 4.

148 For an excellent discussion of mobilization and U.S. prospects see Richard B. Foster, and Francis P. Hoeber, "Limited Mobilization: A Strategy for Preparedness and Deterrence in the Eighties," Orbis 24 (Fall 1980).

¹⁴⁹Richard B. Foster, "Soviet Economic Performance as a Reflection of State Goals and Objectives," Comparative Strategy 1 (January/February 1978), p. 14. For a discussion of Soviet internal mobilization and policy see Colin S. Gray, "Strategic Stability Reconsidered," Daedalus 3 (Fall 1980), also Richard Pipes, "Militarism and the Soviet State," Daedalus 3 (Fall 1980).

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